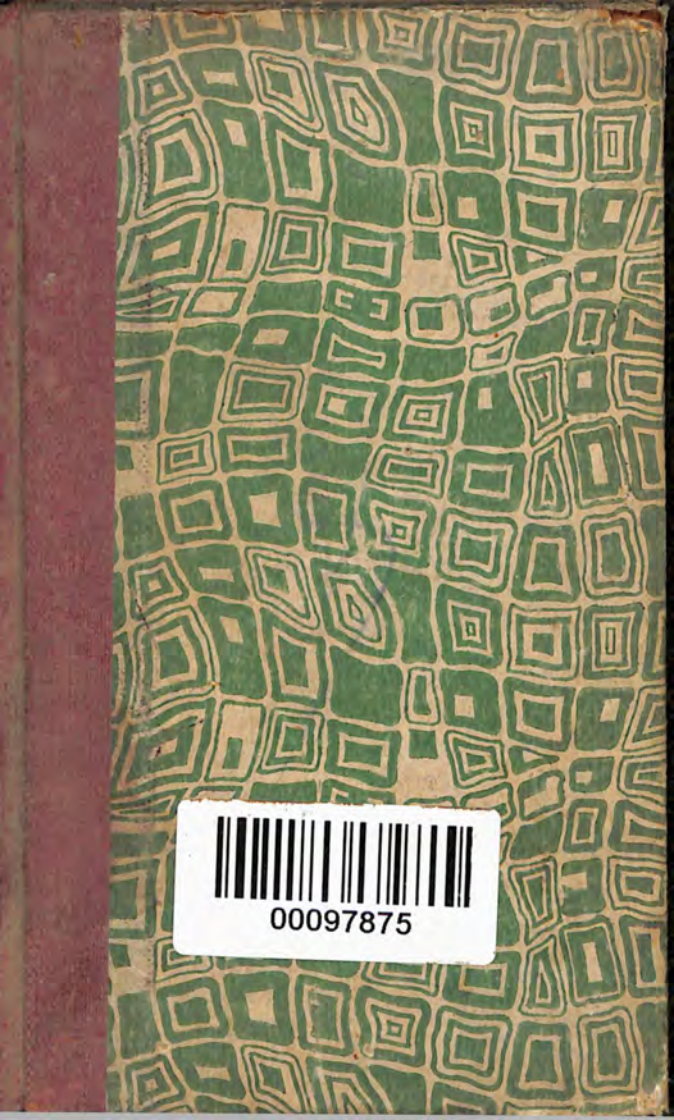
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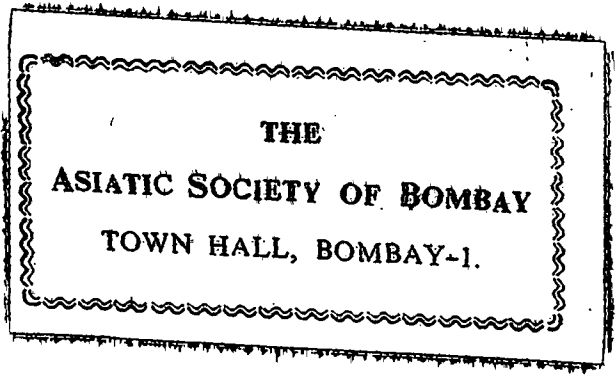

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PROSE,

BY

A POET.

VOL. I.

London:
Printed by A. & R. Spottiswoode,
New-Street-Square.

PROSE,

BY

A POET.

N N- 3- 42

Dwell in some idle brain,
And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,
As thick and numberless
As the gay motes that people the sun-beams.
IL PENSEROSO.

By.

That strain I heard was of a higher mood.
LYCIDAS.

James Montgomery

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

97875

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR
LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, BROWN, AND GREEN,
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1824.

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DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

THE READER AND THIS BOOK.

Reader. — Prose! — so it is; at least the greater part of it; and that which looks like verse may be the most prosaic of all.

Book. — True; but, to make amends, you may expect that the prose of a poet will be poetical.

Reader. — If I thought so, I would fling you into the fire at once; for next to maudlin verse I hate "drunken prose." Your title, to be sure, is a little ominous; — what does it mean?

Book. — Every book must have a title, as every man must have a name.

Reader. — But the title ought to be significant of the contents.

Book. — No more than a man's name need be indicative of his character, which, however

fashionable among savages, could not be tolerated in civil society.

Reader. — No, indeed; we should soon be all savages again, if it were so: — who would choose to be reminded of what he was — a tiger, a bear, or a buffalo, like a wild Indian who glories in the resemblance, — every time his name was pronounced? But it is quite another thing with books, which have no feelings to be hurt.

Book. — But we have characters to lose, and it would be infatuation to throw them away on the outset. Great authors, who ought to be the best judges what to call their offspring, have often given them titles which were masks rather than manifestations of their purpose. "*The Diversions of Purley*," who could expect to be tasked with a game at hard words after such a holiday decoy? Take the other aspect of this double-faced sphynx — "Ἔπεα πτερόεντα;" make "winged words" of these, and still; so far as concerns the subject (happily hieroglyphic as they are),

they will be "Heathen Greek," not to the vulgar only, but to the learned themselves.

Reader. — Yes; but when you have got into the spirit of the treatise you will understand the propriety of the one title, and pardon the affectation of the other.

Book. — My author asks no more for me and mine.

Reader. — Who is your author?

Book. — That is a secret with which, you see, he has not entrusted me.

Reader. — What! don't you know who wrote you?

Book. — I should be the wisest book that ever *was* written, if I did; and that I am sure you do not expect me to be.

Reader. — No, nor desire you; it will be sufficient if you are wise enough for me to understand, without the trouble of being made wiser by reading you.

Book. — Since you are so reasonable, I will tell you all that I know about my author, which is just so much as he has been pleased to communicate to me for your information.

Reader. — A mighty civil gentleman! On what authority does he call himself a poet?

Book. — Many good people have called him one, and he was very willing to take their word for it. Yet, considering the contradictory opinions of the most erudite judges between London and Edinburgh, his claim is very questionable.

Reader. — He would be no poet if it were otherwise. There is not a plot of ground on Parnassus for which the owner could show an undisputed title. The whole mountain has been in the chancery of criticism ever since a foot of it was enclosed from the waste.

Book. — In that venerable court my author has been so intemperately reviled, and so indiscreetly extolled, by volunteer pleaders, whose sincerity could not be questioned, since on both sides they were *un-feed*, that if he had not clung to a doubt of the chancellor (the public,) in his favour, — between assailants and defenders, his reputation must have been crushed for ever. At present, like the variable star in the head of Medusa, he gra-

duates between a luminary of the third and one of the sixth magnitude, as "the muse of fire" burns bright or dim within him.

Reader. — Has he so little spirit as to rank himself among poets at all, with such subaltern pretensions?

Book. — No doubt he keeps his best opinion of himself at home for the gratification of his private vanity; but as before the world he does not claim to be of the highest order, and as there is no contention for inferior degrees, nobody will envy the mediocrity which he assumes.

Reader. — Right; for there is no golden mean in poetry, of all kinds of verse middling being the worst; because that which is worse than it may become better, whereas middling never mends; the fermentation is past.

Book. — You will be the more satisfied to meet my author in prose, the middle way in that line being very passable, as times go. But I assure you, he gave me my present equivocal title for two good reasons.

Reader. — Twice as many as I could have imagined. — What are they ?

Book. — The first I have anticipated ; — every book must be distinguished from every other.

Reader. — If the second be as rational, they shall both pass.

Book. — Hear it then candidly ; — as my contents are a little fantastical, he hoped that in sitting down to read *Prose*, avowedly by a *Poet*, you would be prepared to make allowance for more than ordinary indulgence of imagination in the fable, sentiments, and style of these miscellanies, which have been thrown off at long intervals, and principally on private occasions, during the last ten years. The number and bulk of such things in his portfolio at length made him think that a selection from fugitive pieces, many of which had pleased in a small circle, might be acceptable to the public.

Reader. — Speak out at once, and tell the old story, that the author was prevailed upon

thus to expose himself by the importunity of friends.

Book. — Had it been so, the only gratitude due for such inhuman kindness would be to retort the disgrace upon the promoters of it by such an acknowledgment. Most probably my author has friends as blind and as foolish as other people's, — indeed, it would be little to his credit if he had not; but be this as it may, I am not aware that one of them, when I am announced, will suspect whence I come, till among my contents are discovered some of their old acquaintance.

Reader. — Then he does not intend to be a Great Unknown?

Book. — He only fears that he shall be less known than the "man in the iron mask," to whom that notoriety belongs.

Reader. — At any rate, his name will come out; for they must be friends indeed who can keep *their* friend's secret, whether to his credit or not.

Book. — Especially when that may be the only thing about me which any body else

will care to know. But it is neither to the commendations of friends, nor the censures of enemies, that he looks for success or failure; he has already proved the impotence of both to disturb the level of his own buoyancy for more than a month at a time. He awaits his sentence from you, and you only.

Reader.— From me!— what can he know of me?

Book.— No more than you may conjecture of him,— that you are in existence. Your name, figure, rank, accomplishments, and fifty things besides, are as hidden from him as his own are from you; though, in that respect, it is probable that you will soon have the advantage, by learning more of him than will satisfy your curiosity, and cause you to throw me aside unread, on the credit of my poetical predecessors.

Reader.— I am not so capricious; the very change from verse to prose secures my goodwill at least.

Book.— I have told you my author knows that you *are*; moreover he foresaw that I

should meet you at this time, in this place, and that we should have such conversation together; for which he prepared me with the answers already given to your very natural enquiries.

Reader. — Humph! no small proof of sagacity! — But how are you sure that I am the person whom he had in his "mind's eye?"

Book. — Only because you can be no other; and though you assume a thousand forms, and be as many ladies and gentlemen as you please, at once or in succession, — indeed the more the merrier for him, — yet are you invariably the person, the very person, to whom he has sent a direct message by me.

Reader. — A message! — what is it?

Book. — Why, when he turned me out alone into the wide world, to seek my fortune, — after twenty vain efforts to write a character for me, in the shape of a preface, which should justify my title, apologise for my contents, anticipate criticism, and soften

the sternest reviewer into graciousness, he dropt his pen on the floor in despair, and with a look of forlornness that cast a shade of melancholy over my lightest pages, — I wish you may not find the blight of it there still, — he took me up in his arms, — I was then in my manuscript or *chrysalis* state, and a vast deal more bulky than in my present butterfly form, — I say he took me up in his arms, like an affectionate parent, which I assure you he is, loving me for my very faults, because I fear in his heart he loves them, — was there ever such a zigzag sentence of digressions? — to make all straight, my author took me up and thus addressed me: —

"My little Book,

"I have done all that I could for you, consistent with my incorrigible indolence and constitutional imbecility. I have given you a moderate education, — to me a very expensive one, — and made you as much like myself as such a child ought to be like such a father. This I fear may be no great recom-

mendation; and yet it cannot be quite unavailing, since that which is genuine, however humble in its kind, will not be entirely unwelcome where it encounters human sympathy. I send you abroad, a stranger among strangers; and your success henceforward must depend partly upon yourself, but chiefly upon a certain personage whom you will meet on your travels to the world's end, (and to the end of the world, if you can live so long,) in as many shapes, colours, and sizes as there are clouds in the firmament. This person, wherever found, and under whatever disguise, you will always know at first sight; for I need not teach you the signs of free-masonry between a Book and a Reader: but remember, that the latter must always be addressed as "gentle;" and the more crabbed in reality your patron appears, the more courteous you must be, both for my sake and your own. Wherefore, when you come into the presence of this multitudinous and ubiquitarian being, say thus from me: —

" ' Gentle Reader,

" ' Take this Book as a token of sincere esteem from one whom you may never have known, but who, while invisible as your guardian angel, like him has long been employed in secret offices of kindness on your behalf. Believe me, all the time, labour, study, watching, and, if you will allow it, all the talent expended on its composition, were fervently devoted to your service. Though you may deem some of these pages too trifling, others too grave, a few too florid, and many too dull, yet in all moods and vagaries of mind, I have had the twofold object in view,—to amuse if I could, and benefit if I might, the good-natured reader. When I have succeeded in one of these, I cannot have miscarried altogether in the other; for in the wildest humours, amidst reveries of egotism, sallies of fancy, and mazes of description, I have never lost sight of some moral aim, though I have not always placed it ostentatiously before your eye:—

at the same time, in my most portentous lucubrations, I have endeavoured to embellish, though I may have failed to illustrate those solemn and eternal verities, which I will not say I have ventured to introduce occasionally, but which, repulsive as they may be to some whom I would fain conciliate, I have not dared to exclude altogether from a work principally intended for intellectual dissipation in leisure hours.

" 'I have done my part to please you; and if you do half as much to *be* pleased, neither of us will have reason to complain. Readers in general are little aware how much of the entertainment of such works depends upon themselves. If you, my gentle friend, are one of these, make the experiment with my little book: do your best to be delighted with it; and if there be stars in heaven, or flowers on earth, you shall not lose your labour.' "

So saying, my author dismissed me. I have come from his hands to place myself in yours, where I lie at your mercy.

Reader.—I will do you justice.

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PROSE, BY A POET.

PEN, INK, AND PAPER.

THERE was little in my ink-stand, and nothing in my head, when I sat down, with a fair sheet of Bath-post before me, to write an essay for a lady's portfolio. At first, with a degree of self-complacency, which perhaps none but an author in favour can feel, I contemplated the blank under my eye, which was about to be enlivened by my wit, or enriched with my eloquence. As I mended my pen to begin, thought I, — the wisest man on earth could not anticipate what I shall do here, nor the shrewdest guess the subject which will speedily adorn these pages, for I myself am not yet

in the secret, nor do I know what I am going to write. This reflection startled me, and, "What will it be?" came with such importunity into my mind, that I could not help replying, "What indeed!" There was silence among my thoughts,—a dead silence; and though I called them,—called them repeatedly and earnestly, as if I were a drowning man, to come to my assistance, not one would move or speak. I looked with consternation around, but saw nothing except pen, ink, and paper;—nay, do what I would, I could make no more of them; pen, ink, and paper they were and remained. Every moment increased my perplexity, for whatever might be their good will, or their occult capabilities, they could do nothing for me of themselves; the pen could not go to the ink, the ink could not come to the paper, the paper could not pour forth ideas and array itself with words, as the earth in spring throws out verdure and flowers from its bosom, spontaneously spreading beauty and fertility where all had been waste and barren before. Alas! my imma-

culate sheet lay in view, like an untrodden wilderness of snow, which I must cross, without a bush, or a knoll, or a single inequality on the surface, to guide my course, or awaken one pleasing association amidst the dreary monotony of scene. And truly if it *had* been what it so chillingly resembled—the very sight of it freezing my blood—I felt just then, as though I would rather have been "the man perishing amidst the snow," in immortality of verse, than the living being that I was, by a comfortable fireside, with no perils to fear beyond such as I might encounter at a mahogany writing-desk, in traversing with my finger-ends a few sheets of cream-coloured paper. To consummate my misery, I recollected that one of my fair friend's correspondents being in a similar dilemma, though not, as in my case, from the folly of self-confidence, had the felicity to fall asleep, and dream so entertainingly, that I only wondered how he could find in his heart to awake, unless it was for the pleasure of telling his dream. But though fervently invoked, Apollo in no shape,

and least of all in the shape of Morpheus, would come to my relief; nor could I dream of sleeping in such distress, for if I had slept, whatever were my visions, pen, ink, and paper would haunt me through them, and I knew that when I awoke I should find nothing before me but pen, ink, and paper still.

Again, with a feeling too forlorn to be remembered without a relapse of it, I took up my pen; the ink had already dried in it, though not a line had been written except that shortest and sweetest and easiest of all, as every body knows, "*Dear Madam!*" I cast my eye down the first page of the paper, and if it had been an indictment for petty larceny, I could scarcely have faced it with more horror;—it was as white, and as smooth, and as empty as ever! I turned to the ink-stand, and looked into it, like Esop's thirsty crow into the pitcher with a drop of water at the bottom, which the sagacious bird,—it could not be the same crow that let the cheese fall out of his beak into the fox's chops,—raised to the brim by dropping pebble after pebble into it.

But my difficulty was not to bring the ink out of the stand, but the meaning out of the ink. "Ah!" quoth I, gently shaking it, "here lies the quintessence of all science, all art, all invention, all expression. This drop of ink could speak all languages, discover all secrets, communicate all feelings, display all knowledge, detect all sophistry. There is not a thought which the heart of man can conceive, or a word which human lips can utter, but it is here,—absolutely in my hand, before my eyes; yet I am so blind, or so stupid, that I can discern nothing but a decoction of nut-galls and copperas. O that I had a talisman, which would enable me to call up from this dark pool all the 'legions, angel-forms,' who lie 'entranced' within it

'Thick as autumnal leaves that strew the brooks
In Vallombrosa.'

Paradise Lost, Book I.

"O that I had a chemical test, whereby I might analyze this little fluid, and learn,—

not what it is made of, but what might be made of it! I am too dull at present to fish up a single idea from the bottom: yet if ten thousand people were to sit down to the experiment, each one would produce something different from every other; and were they all to record their lucubrations in this ink, with this pen, on this paper, their themes, their thoughts, their diction, would appear as diverse as their faces, their voices, and their handwriting."

Fanciful as this soliloquy may seem to my readers, to me it was a golden key, which of its own accord unlocked a casket of curious speculations, so dazzling, attractive, and numberless, that I knew not where to begin, or which to select. It was evident, however, on the first glance at this treasure, that I might fill my paper with a descriptive catalogue of only a few of the gems, while the mine whence they came would be as exhaustless as the collective imaginations of all minds that ever have been, are, or will be in this world of everlasting vicissitude. Accordingly, in

brisker spirits, I snatched up the pen once more, though it trembled like a living thing between my fingers, so impatient did I feel to fix down with it one of those fleeting visionaries which a breath or a motion might startle away, and for ever dissolve the enchantment. And thus I began with the first that I could touch.

If I were little Jackey Jessamy, ten years old last Candlemas, with a flaxen poll, rosy cheeks, and a frilled shirt-neck; — and if, having mastered pot-hooks and strokes, I had made my way into joined hand, — with this pen, from this ink, on this paper, I should be inditing, "Fortune favours the brave," — "Custom is second nature," — "Be wise betimes; shun darling crimes," with other saws and maxims equally elegant and edifying, — which no time, no space, no circumstance could ever blot out from the tablet of memory; though for the time present, so far from improving either my morals or my handwriting by the exercise, I might be playing truant in my head, and whipping a top,

or striking a ball with all my heart. — But if I were Jackey's mamma, and through means of this same apparatus were corresponding with his schoolmaster, on the best method of spoiling the dear boy, there is no doubt but that, with due maternal tenderness, I would expatiate upon his naturally quick parts, and give special warning that these should not be blunted by too much study; for reading wears the eyes, writing soils the fingers, and arithmetic wrinkles the forehead before its time: — but I would recommend the utmost care of his person, the free indulgence of his gingerbread appetite, and the most conscientious neglect of his morals. — Ah! then, a hundred to one but this very letter would be the death-warrant to the poor lad's best interests; which, being duly executed by the obsequious pedagogue, would cause him to leave school with as little head as the fondest parent could desire to see on his heir-apparent's shoulders, to maintain the family imbecility, and transmit it unimpaired to posterity.

Were I an enamoured youth, dying of three days' banishment from the fair one, in the light of whose eyes alone I could live, from this black magazine I should draw flames, and darts, and all the artillery of love to assail her; with this pen I should inscribe this paper with figures and fantasies so numberless and heterogeneous, that it might seem a scroll of "hieroglyphics, elder than the Nile," utterly undecypherable by any except the initiated nymph. — But were I the damsel herself, and as simple as the woodlark that warbles on the ground, while the bird lime along the snare is already falling upon its wings, though I had never seen any thing of the sort before, it may be presumed, that the kindly instinct of nature alone would teach me to interpret every cabalistic character; and, in replying to his address, my heart, by sympathy with his, would draw from the same fountain, — this identical inkstand, — hopes and fears, anxieties and blandishments, to cheer, distress, perplex and delight him to his wits' end.

A fit of higher frenzy seized me here. "Away with juvenility and feminility!" I exclaimed. "Hark! — I hear trumpets, — I see armies, — they are rushing to battle, — and I am at the head, — at the head of the British; — I am Wellington, — Wellington at Waterloo, — Wellington against Bonaparte! The combat thickens; the enemy pours upon us faster and fiercer, and heavier at every charge; we stand, but we stand to fall on every side, — and yet we stand: we grow smaller and denser, but more invincible still. While the balance of victory trembles so uncertainly, that a laurel-leaf from the head of either commander might turn the scale, — I see the happy moment on which depends the fate of ages, — I seize it; I dart my own spirit at once through the breast of every Briton; — there is but one man in the field, and every soldier is a limb of him; — there is but one soul, — it is Wellington's. We roll upon the foe, exhausted with countless and fruitless assaults; — he yields, and Bonaparte, his arms and his empire are no

more. I sit down at the drum head to write dispatches. This pen, with this ink, retraces the conflict; the field of Waterloo, with Europe for the prize, is fought and won again on this paper; this sheet becomes the proudest record of human history."

"What a dream of delirium is this! Ambition begone. I am myself again: but in an instant my soul undergoes a new transmigration. Who am I now?—A man of honour, with nothing of Wellington about me except the sword at my side. I have a friend; I have only one in the world; and he is principally my friend to protect me against my greatest enemy; — that greatest enemy is myself. Of course there is war between us every day in one form or another, and I am never victorious but when he has beaten me into mastership of myself. He meets me at day-break, reeking from the gaming-table, where I have lost my money and my senses, and am rushing forth I know not whither, and I know not for what; but there is a strange misgiving about me, as if a

fiend dragged me by the hair of the head to a nameless solitude, which has often haunted my imagination, — there to commit 'a deed without a name!' My friend arrests me, insults me; that is, he stops me and speaks kindly to me; I resent his impertinence, and repulse him in fury. He still keeps his temper — that is intolerable; he tries to soothe, but that inflames me to madness of revenge. I burst away from him; the foul fiend carries me off in another direction, — for though a fatality of self-destruction lay upon me before, yet now my honour requires that I should first shoot my friend through the body. I cannot die in peace, unless I dispatch him to meet me as an accuser at the bar of eternal justice, when I appear there with his blood and my own upon my head. I reach my miserable home; I take this pen, this ink, this paper, prepare a challenge, and send it off—hold:—I must not go a step further in such a career; I will not be a man of honour another moment."

Pen, ink, and paper are still before me, as

at first; and neither copies at school, a letter full of maternal solicitude, billets doux, dispatches, nor challenges have been produced. I look again at the ink, in which the elements of all knowledge are blended indistinguishably, and I think, "*If* I were a poet!" Why nothing in the world is easier than to think oneself a poet,—and next to it, nothing more common than to be thought so by others!—Aye, but to *be* a poet!—why, to be sure, that is quite a different thing.—Well, but *if* I were a poet, how could I illumine these blank leaves, and adorn them with imagery more imperishable than the sculptures of Greece? If, for example! I were Scott?—Impossible! Campbell?—next to impossible! Byron?—more than impossible! Make what you will of the phrase, it is not a thousandth part so absurd as the thought. Well then, if I were Southey?—No. Wordsworth?—No. Bloomfield?—No. Moore?—No. I was so disheartened by these negatives, that I durst not hazard another *if*; but it was my good fortune to fall

immediately into a brown study, when, to my astonishment and delight, the afore-named personages, one by one, came into the room, and sitting down on the very chair which I had occupied, — how I happened to vacate my seat I know not, any more than by what spell I was replaced in it, at the end of two hours, — each in his turn made use of my pen, ink, and paper. Oh! if I could copy what they wrote, — what only one of them wrote, — I should make these pages the most acceptable that were ever presented by me to the public; but I could not have passed them for my own, without hazarding the fate of the jackdaw who borrowed the peacock's feathers. Nor will I plume myself at their expence in another way, by foisting impotent imitations upon my good-natured readers, to gain spurious credit, under the sanction of great names.

The door was first opened without ceremony by a hearty-looking, middle-aged country gentleman, who came in as if he were just arrived at his own home after a day

of grouse-shooting on the moors, with a smile of indescribable good humour on his countenance, through which some gay apparition of thought seemed breaking, like the moon out of a cloud:—he sat down, took up the pen, dipt it in the ink, and presently covered the paper with an eight-syllable lay of the easiest verse in the world, that ambled and cantered in all the paces of a Highland pegasus, through an episode concerning barons and knights, and ladies and lakes, and fields and tournaments, and feasts and songs, and forests and mountains, and minstrels,—so unlike any thing that any body else ever wrote, and so like all that he himself had written, that I could not mistake the author. No sooner, however, had he risen up, than the whole,—which I read as he penned, and which he penned as fast as I could read,—vanished from the paper and from my mind, leaving both as blank as before.

I worried my nether lip with chagrin, keeping my eyes disconsolately fixed on the paper, which lay just as I had folded it when

I first meditated an extemporaneous essay, without having ever chosen a subject, as if inspiration would come from the planets or elsewhere in the moment I was ready to receive it. Such an interposition would have been miraculous enough; but I now witnessed a greater miracle—for letters, syllables, words, sentences, paragraphs, pages, (the leaves turning over of themselves,) overran the sheet of paper, as if an invisible hand were inscribing them. This indeed must have been the case, for when I recovered sufficient presence of mind to attend particularly to the process, I observed the pen as diligently doing its duty between the inkstand and the paper, as if it were itself "instinct with spirit," and delivering a soliloquy on its own little stage. I then began eagerly to read the manuscript, and was so fortunate as to overtake the pen just when it had completed the last line, and fell as if hastily thrown aside by one who had been using it. Looking up, and towards the door, I imagined, (but I was not quite sure, except at the very

moment,) that I caught the disappearing face of my former visitor, turned over his shoulder, with an arch significance of expression, which made it at once "another and the same," and left me bewildered with transport at having discovered the greatest secret of the age, yet grievously tempted to doubt whether I had made any discovery at all. Of one thing, however, I am positive to this hour, that as the sun shone from the passage into the room, when the door was closing, I saw *the shadow* of Sir Walter Scott following the person who went out. Whether that "*magni nominis umbra*" had been the unseen scribe at my table, I pretend not to determine, for when I recurred to the paper the writing was obliterated, and I recollect nothing of what in the perusal had made me feel as though I were beside myself, except that it was in prose, and from infallible internal evidence, a fragment of some unpublished,—most probably some hitherto uninvented,—tale by "the Author of Waverley;"—it had neither beginning nor end, except the

end of one polysyllabic word with which it began, and the beginning of another with which it ended; yet was all between so intensely interesting, that no context was wanting to render the page under the eye the only page for which the reader cared.

How long I stood musing on what I had thus seen both of the visible and invisible world of letters I cannot tell, but when I looked again at my chair, it was occupied by a slender figure, with a Scottish physiognomy, the features of which were indifferent when at rest, but when "the phœnix spirit burned within," these also took fire, and grew as brilliant and changeable as flames, "turning every way," while the poet gave utterance to his conceptions. He was in no hurry, however, for this display; and to do him justice, he pored so long over his task, writing very slowly, halting sometimes on the down-stroke of a letter, and so frequently retracing, interlining, and blotting out, that having lost all patience, I was ready to push him from the seat, when he suddenly rose; his eye kindled

into rapture; and, from a completely disfigured and illegible sheet, — in tones that yet ring in my ear, like music remembered from infancy, — he recited about twenty lyric lines; a spell in which he had bound up so much harmony, splendour and pathos of language, imagination and feeling, that I could have listened to the repetition of the strain a thousand and a thousand times over, from morning till evening on a midsummer day, — and afterwards realized all the romance of the song in the fairy-land of a Midsummer Night's Dream.

Yet had he scarcely read them once, when Southey, who had been walking to and fro in the passage, till he could hold out no longer, burst into the room, and Campbell, whom I forgot to name before, vanished in a moment; but whether he went through the door, the window, or the ceiling, I could not distinguish. My new visitor had an eagle's face with an eagle's eye in it; and if he had not the wing of the royal bird, he gave its swiftness to my pen, for in less time than I

have been eking out these few lines to commemorate his achievement, he had filled in a very small crowded hand, the four pages of my paper, (from which C.'s verses had erased themselves,) and was looking round for another sheet, but not seeing one at hand, he put on his hat, and went out with the expedition of Apollo's own courier, who had to compass heaven and earth in four-and-twenty hours. His tale was only just begun, and the theme was the strangest that poetry ever made palatable to good taste, being compounded of all monstrous, all discordant things, in art and nature, history, tradition, and fable; yet, like his own palace of fire and water, in the Hindoo heaven, revolting elements were so magically blended and reconciled, that his work, so far as it had proceeded, had all the life, and symmetry, and truth, that distinguish the legitimate offspring of genius.

I was left in such amazement by the leger-demain of the last performer on my pen, ink, and paper, that the next had gone through his exercise before I was aware of his pre-

sence, and I only just recognized, as he stole quietly away, the meek profile of Robert Bloomfield. He had transcribed in a feeble character a few stanzas, previously meditated on the spot where the spectacle which he described had thrown him into a trance of rhyme, — an old blind woman, at her cottage door, nursing a grand-daughter, in the sunshine. It was an every-day scene, they were every-day persons, and every-day sentiments; yet over the whole had the light of song shed such loveliness and lustre, that though the charm of the picture was its reality, the picture charmed more than even the reality might have done.

But this enchantment as well as the rest melted away like the rainbow from my paper, while I gazed upon it. I had not time to regret the loss, for another of the tuneful fraternity, of diminutive stature, but with the airiness and vivacity of a bird, darting in at the door, lighted on the chair, and rapidly cross-lined and speckled my paper with the words and the melody of a song, composed and

set to music by himself; which he immediately warbled forth with the sweetness of a redbreast, at the fall of the leaf. It was simple and passionate, tender and indignant, at the same time. The burthen of course was the beauty and the wrongs of a female, but whether she was his mistress or his country I could not precisely determine; if it was Ireland of whom he sung, his patriotism had the fervour of love; if it was Delia, his love had the impetuosity of patriotism. Would that he had always written as worthily or as ambiguously; the name of the bard, then, would never have been degraded under that of Little, much less under that of Moore!

A grave personage had already stept up to the chair which was vacant. His countenance was signally indented with thought; every line, every look was full of meaning, or rather of mystery; it was meaning indeed, but what meaning nobody except himself could tell till he spoke or wrote, and then not more than half of his hearers or readers would have capacity enough to comprehend

half of it. I knew him at a glance, and hailed him as one, who has deserved more, and suffered more, than any of his contemporaries; but to whom posterity will undoubtedly do justice, though in no age can the poet, equally of intellect and imagination, be a favourite with the vulgar, the indolent, or the cynical. Need I say, that it was Wordsworth, who now entered in one of the most abstracted "*moods of my own mind.*" He had something wrapt up in a silk-handkerchief, which he set down on the table, and opened as carefully as if the article within was made of spun-glass. It was a nest of young nightingales, not which he had taken in the wood, but which he had ransomed out of the clutches of some rascally school-boys, who were glad to sell their ill-gotten prize for pence to buy marbles, which they knew better how to handle than unfledged birds. Having thus developed his treasure, instead of taking up the pen, he took up the nest in his left hand, made an admiration stop with his right; then, after a silence that spoke unutterable things, he be-

gan in low but gradually loud and louder numbers to chaunt, (in English translations,) the songs which these young minstrels might be singing in the woods that day twelve months, in memory of their escape from captivity through his interference. I snatched up the pen myself, but in vain attempted to mark down the words from his lips; the ink would not flow, nor the paper receive an impression.

W. had run through half a dozen of his nightingale cadences, and might have sung till next morning without hazard of interruption from me, when a being of almost superhuman appearance made a third in our company. He might have issued from the world of spirits, for before either of us were aware, he stood glaring upon us. W. perceiving him, instantly flew away with his birds, and left me alone with the mysterious apparition. It was Byron;—he seized the pen,—it became a magician's wand in his grasp;—he touched the ink-stand,—it expanded into a cauldron like that of the witches in Macbeth, and there

was a dance of " black spirits and white, — blue spirits and grey," about it, using their ineffable incantations with such effect, that the walls of the house fell into nothing before them, and my Lord suddenly unfolding the paper, which had already undergone so many metamorphoses, it stretched itself into a landscape, under the gloom of night, with a wan ray of the moon in the last quarter gleaming along it. Instantly we found ourselves, the mighty lord and I, in a corner of Lara's hall,

——— " Where the moon-beam shone
Through the dim lattice on the floor of stone,
And the high fretted roof, and saints, that there
On Gothic windows knelt in pictured prayer."

Then, in the lights and shadows of eternity, passed before us the vision that Lara saw, and at which he, who never blenched in a human presence, nor shrunk from any thing that steel could penetrate, fell down in a swoon,

" Cold as the marble where his length was laid,
Pale as the beam that on his features play'd."

"Describe it, describe it!" cry a thousand eager treble voices.—My lord himself alone could do that, and since he has not done it, for the best of all possible reasons,—that a secret untold is worth a million revealed,—I shall not venture to breathe upon the subject, and disturb a charm that will otherwise last till the dissolution of nature.

A loud but hesitating succession of raps at the door, dissipated the whole phantasmagoria. A poet, who shall be nameless, came in; I looked up, and recollected myself! Starting from the abyss of brown study, I found that I was still seated at my desk, as if nothing had happened. Nothing indeed *had* happened, except that while I seemed to be holding sublime intercommunion with the oracles of the age, I had been indefatigably employing pen, ink, and paper, to write what the reader of these pages hath already seen, to the end of the former paragraph. Though I felt some regret on being restored to my own dull senses again, that regret was abundantly alleviated by perceiving my task so

nearly accomplished, — not the first sheet only, but a second and a third being already laid waste with the foregoing reveries, though I had not half exhausted the first ideas that flowed fast and thick upon me, the instant I imagined what might be done by others with the writing materials before me, when I could do nothing with them myself. But I must draw to a conclusion; my paper is full, my ink-stand empty, my pen worn out. My readers, should I be fortunate enough to have any who will accompany me thus far in these lucubrations, may follow at their leisure the vein of rich ore that I have opened, and discover hidden treasures of infinitely greater value than these; while they conjecture what critics, politicians, philosophers, divines, &c. &c., might have made of these very tools of authorship, which I have handled with no great skill in shewing how children, parents, lovers, warriors, men of honour, and poets, might have used them. It is not improbable, after all, that every body into whose hands my "pen, ink, and paper," may fall, will suggest

some way in which I might have more delightfully and profitably disposed of them. Be it so; — but to prove it, let all the fault-finders sit down immediately, and excel me as far as they can, which I sincerely wish may be as much as they please. Then, if this reverie shall have roused each to produce something better than itself, it will be acknowledged that I might have been worse employed than in recording such crudities.

MORNA.

MACPHERSON'S Ossian has had many admirers, and it cannot be denied that the rhapsodies attributed to the Son of Fingal abound with striking imagery, heroic sentiment, and hardy expression, the effect of which, on young minds especially, may be highly exhilarating for a while. But, independent of the obscurity, sameness, and repetition, which are probably characteristics of the original,—if any original be in existence;—though it is almost as much at a man's peril to doubt that now, as it was to believe it formerly,—the translation is "done into English," in such a "Babylonish dialect," that it might be presumed, no ear, accustomed to the melody of pure verse, or the freedom of eloquent prose, could endure the incongruities of a style, in which broken verse of various measures, and halting prose

of unmanageable cadences, compound sentences as difficult to read and as dissonant to hear, as a strain of music would be, in execution and effect, if every bar were set to a different time and in a different key. If for such wild works of imagination a corresponding form of diction be desirable, a style *between* prose and verse, not one in which both are heterogeneously jumbled, might perhaps be invented. For this purpose we must have a poetical foundation, with a prose superstructure; the former, that the vehicle of thought may admit of florid embellishment, and the latter, that full licence may be obtained of accommodating the phraseology to the ideas, unincumbered with rhyme, and unlimited by metrical trammels.

The episode of Morna is perhaps the most truly beautiful and pathetic, as well as simple and intelligible narrative among these singular productions. In the following experiment, which is submitted to the curious, the anapestic foot is adopted as the

ground-work, because cadences of this measure have peculiar fluency. There is some difficulty, indeed, to the reader, in hitting the right accents at all times, from the great laxity of our language in this respect and the carelessness of writers, — yet, as this movement, either in verse or prose, admits of the utmost variety of subdivisions, and the lines may be expanded or contracted at pleasure, according to the burthen of matter; it is well suited to a mode of composition, which would blend the harmony of song with the freedom of discourse, if such an union were compatible. The present attempt to tame "prose run mad" into what may be easily designated by a phrase not less opprobrious, has a claim to be received with indulgence by the admirers of Gaelic legends; and, if a fault, it may be forgiven by the critics, with perfect impunity to public taste, since the offence is not likely to be imitated, nor will the original culprit soon be induced to repeat it, being himself of opinion, that though a few pages got up

in this manner may not be unpleasing, a volume would be intolerable. It is necessary to add, that the following experiment on the tale of Morna is not made from Macpherson, but from a version of Fingal, of which a few copies only were printed at Edinburgh some years ago, for private circulation. Whether the work has ever been further published, the present writer knows not, but it appeared to him, on a hasty perusal, preferable to the old one.

ARGUMENT.

Cathbat and Morna are lovers. Duchômar, the rival of Cathbat, having slain the latter in the chace, meets Morna, tells her what he has done, and woos her for himself. In the course of the interview, they fall by each other's hands, and die together.—The story is supposed to be recited to Cuchullin, general of the tribes of Erin, who, at the conclusion, laments the premature loss of the two warriors, and the death of the maiden.

Cathbat fell by the sword of Duchômar,
At the oak of the loud-rolling stream;
Duchomar came to the cave of the forest,
And spake to the gentle maid.

" Morna, fairest of women!
Beautiful daughter of high-born Cormac!
Wherefore alone in the circle of stones,
Alone at the cave of the mountain?
The old oak sounds in the wind
That ruffles the distant lake;
Black clouds engirdle the gloomy horizon:
But thou art like snow on the heath;
Thy ringlets resemble the light mist of Cromla,
When it winds round the sides of the hill,
In the beams of the evening sun."

" Whence comest thou, sternest of men?"
Said the maid of the graceful locks.
" Evermore dark was thy brow;
Now red is thine eye, and ferocious:
Doth Swaran appear on the sea?
What tidings from Lochlin?"

" No tidings from Lochlin, O Morna!
I come from the mountains;
I come from the chace of the fleet-footed hind:
Three red deer have fallen by my arrows;
One fell for thee, fair daughter of Cormac!
As my soul do I love thee, white-handed maiden!
Queen of the hearts of men!"

" Duchomar!" the maiden replied,
" None of my love is for thee;

Dark is thine eye-brow, thy bosom is darker;
And hard as the rock is thine heart:—
But thou, the dear offspring of Armin,
Cathbat! art Morna's love.
Bright as the sunbeams thy beautiful locks,
When the mist of the valley is climbing the
mountain:—
Saw'st thou the chief, the young hero,
Cathbat the brave, in thy course on the hill?
The daughter of Cormac the mighty
Tarries to welcome her love from the field."
"Long shalt thou tarry, O Morna!"
Sullenly, fiercely, Duchomar replied:
"Long shalt thou tarry, O Morna!
To welcome the rude son of Armin.
Lo! on this sharp-edged sword,
Red to the hilt is the life-blood of Cathbat:
Slain is thine hero;
By me was he slain;
His cairn will I build upon Cromla.—
Daughter of blue-shielded Cormac,
Turn on Duchomar thine eye;
His arm is the mountain thunder."
"Fallen in death is the brave son of Armin?"
The maiden exclaim'd with the voice of love:
"Fallen in death on the pine-crested hill?

The loveliest youth of the host!
Of heroes the first in the chace!
The direst of foes to the sea-roving stranger!—
Dark is Duchomar in wrath;
Deadly his arm to me;
Foe unto Morna! lend me thy weapon:
Cathbat I loved, and I love his blood."
He yielded the sword to her tears;
She plunged the red blade through his side;
He fell by the stream;
He stretch'd forth his hand, and his voice was heard:—
" Daughter of blue-shielded Cormac!
Thou hast cut off my youth from renown:
Cold is the sword, the glory of heroes,
Cold in my bosom, O Morna!
Ah! give me to Moina, the maiden,
For I am her dream in the darkness of night:
My tomb she will build in the midst of the camp,
That the hunter may hail the bright mark of my fame:
But draw forth the sword from my bosom,
For cold is the blade, O Morna!"
Slowly and weeping she came,
And drew forth the sword from his side:
He struck the red steel to her heart:—

She fell; on the earth lay her tresses dishevell'd;
The blood gurgled fast from the wound,
And crimson'd her arm of snow.

* * * * * * *

" Tell me no more of the maiden,"
Cuchullin, the war-chief of Erin, exclaim'd.
" Peace to the souls of the heroes!
Their prowess was great in the conflict of swords.
Let them glide by my chariot in war!
Let their spirits appear in the clouds of the valley!
So shall my breast be undaunted in danger,
Mine arm like the thunder of heaven.
" Be thou as a moonbeam, O Morna!
When my sight is beginning to fail;
When my soul is reposing in peace,
And the tumult of war is no more."

OLD WOMEN.

"Oh! aged women! ye who weekly catch
The pittance tost by law-forced charity,
And die so slowly that none call it murder!"

COLERIDGE.

"AN old woman" is a cant term of contempt, reproach, or abhorrence, as malice or wantonness may suggest, with the unthinking and the unfeeling; yet old women, poor old women,—such as were formerly burnt for witches by those who were none themselves, in this christian country,—such as in other lands to this day are carried out by their own offspring and exposed to perish in the woods by famine, fatigue, or wild beasts,—poor old women are those, who, taking them all in all, have lived less for themselves, and more for others, than any class beside of our fellow-creatures. Nineteen out of twenty among these are widows,—for in the lowest station of life there are few that grow old in "single

blessedness," — who, since they were weaned from their own mothers' breasts, have been inured to hard labour, to unkindness, to personal affliction, to family troubles, to scanty clothing, and frugal fare, if not to frequent want, and hunger, and cold, and nakedness; while their strength has been spent, and their spirits exhausted, in ministering to the luxury, comfort, and maintenance of strangers, with whom they have been servants; or relatives, among whom they have been slaves.

How often do we behold these, especially in the courts and alleys, the garrets and cellars of large towns, cast out, as it were, in their old age, from the lap of that society which they have nourished in their own, — so poor, and bereaved, and neglected, that their misery can scarcely be affected for the better or the worse by any changes in national affairs! Whether the tide of public prosperity ebbs or flows, they remain forlorn and obscure, far beneath the sunshine or the storm; like the sea-weed, floating though fixed on the rock, at the bottom of the deep,

too low to sink, too fast to be removed, till the hand of Time plucks them up by the roots, and casts them on the shore of eternity. Yet so great and universal has been the distress of all descriptions of people above and around them, of late years, that even these destitute, afflicted, and almost friendless creatures, have found themselves more straitened in their means of subsistence, more shorn of comparative comforts, and bowed down with absolute wretchedness, than ever. The poor, in ordinary seasons, have many opportunities of lightening each other's burthens by little offices of kindness, and the interchange of such bounty as they can occasionally spare; and which, to their credit be it spoken, they are often more willing than able to spare to their sick or infirm neighbours. This instinctive benevolence is peculiarly conspicuous in the strong sympathies and unaffected charities of persons in humble life of that sex to which the distressed heroines of this chivalrous essay belong. These, after having lived their threescore years and ten in

the painful, toilsome, unregarded exercise of the humane as well as useful duties which their sex and situation imposed upon them, —in their declining days have need of hearts as compassionate, and hands as diligent, to minister to them, as their own have been to minister to others from their youth upward; nay, from their very childhood, as shall presently be shewn. Yet in what utter desolation, — like lepers of old, driven forth from the camp of society, as if their very age were infectious, and the young would grow old, and the strong lose the use of their limbs, with looking at them; — in what utter desolation are they frequently doomed to wear out their tattered remnant of mortality, already torn to rags in the service of those who have forsaken them! And when they die, how few are sorry! — in some cases none, except it be the parish overseers, who grudge the cost of a pauper's burial, though, by the demise of the unfortunate pensioner, a population of twenty thousand souls save a weekly stipend on which a lady's lap-dog would starve; that is,

if the pittance were laid out in the purchase of such dainties as are necessaries of life to those delicate animals, but which never enter into the imagination, much less into the mouth, of an old woman pining to death at the public expence. Let us take a sketch from the life, —a general picture of course, —of one of these well-deserving but ill-rewarded beings, from the cradle to the grave; and it will be seen, that in every stage of advancing existence, through a series of self-denials, it has been her chief business to promote the enjoyments, and alleviate the sufferings, of those with whom she has been connected. Hard indeed is her lot, to want in her last hour what she has expended her health and her strength in bestowing.

A female child is born in a poor man's family; and there is joy there, even on such an event, for nature will be glad at that time, however melancholy the prospect of futurity. If the infant be hardy enough to survive a few years of bad nursing, coarse fare, and perhaps cruel usage from rude parents, or

sordid relatives among whom she has been left an early orphan, — no sooner is she able to carry a child than she begins to learn to nurse; her little arms are strained to clasp a baby half as big as herself, and her feeble knees totter beneath a burthen which she kisses with transports of unfeigned affection, while it almost bears her down. Thus, from the very lap she is taught by the sweetest feelings of nature, as well as by premature toil, the lessons of love, and the habit of sacrificing self-will and self-indulgence to the wants and the caprices of others; she scarcely ceases to be an infant before she is initiated in the practical duties of a mother. Yet she is happy, because the sun shines, the shower falls, the rainbow shoots, and the birds sing for her; sleep is sweet, and play is pleasant, and food delicious; she has not yet found out the secret of being discontented with what she has, and coveting what she has not.

As her younger sisters grow up under her, they gradually relieve her from the delightful though oppressive employment of nursing;

but it is only to give her the opportunity of undertaking harder and less amiable tasks. She now becomes her mother's assistant in housekeeping; that is, the household drudge of all the family: she cooks, and scours, and bakes, and washes, and works, when she ought to be improving her mind at school, or exhilarating her spirits and invigorating her limbs in healthful sports with companions of her own age. Almost the only solace of her painful pre-eminence at home, in this stage of life, is that, as her mother's deputy, she can exercise a petty authority over her juniors on the hearth-stone, and scold and slap the little ones when they are obstreperous, or she is ill-humoured. Presently, however, she is tall enough to be put out to service; — a place is found for her in some family, little superior in wealth or information to her own; and here she experiences how much truth there is in that proverbial saying among persons of her class, — "there's no end of women's work." The hardier sex, from the master to the youngest apprentice, labour and

rest at intervals. The servant girl is up earliest in the morning; she is on foot all day; even the Sabbath scarcely affords a breathing space to her; and till she is permitted to retire at night, she knows no respite from active drudgery, except the few minutes of her meals: but those meals are hearty ones; her couch may be straw or eider-down for aught she knows or cares, for her slumbers are sound and her dreams are golden; she thrives, and is cheerful amidst all her toils and privations. The flowers come in April, the nightingale sings in May, and love in due season awakens in her breast all the hopes and the fears, the jealousies, anxieties and entrancements, that agitate more refined and susceptible bosoms; for love is a leveller, and his influence is equally overpowering in whatever heart it prevails. Our young maiden, in her own expressive language, is sure to have "a sweetheart," with whom the wooing interludes, amidst her weary service, make toil delightful, if not for its own sake, yet for his. Meanwhile, though pinioned to

time and place in her duty, like a wren sitting on nine eggs, every one of which must be hatched; yet as even the brooding mother flits occasionally from the nest "to pick a scanty meal," and then returns with double ardour to her task, — so our indefatigable maiden seizes the hasty opportunity whenever it occurs, if it be but for a moment, to steal out and exchange a word or a look with the youth of her choice, and feel as if there were something in life worth living for to the poorest of its possessors. And so there is.

Preliminaries are soon arranged, where being thrice asked at church is all the legal formality required; they are married, and she has a home of her own, such as it is; — but she is charmed with being mistress of herself, and heedless of the future. Her husband lives with her a few years, and they are as well off as other folks: their children are multiplied, so are their troubles; — trade fails; her partner is unfortunate or improvident; his health is broken, and he dies before his time; or he falls into bad company,

his morals are debauched, he goes for a soldier, or runs away nobody knows whither; and she is left, in middle age, a widow, or a widowed wife, with a numerous offspring, the oldest of which is hardly fit for apprenticeship. These grow up around her, — if they are not dispersed by the overseers, — according to her own character, in habits of industry or sloth, subsisting frugally on their honest earnings, or miserably on parish allowance. One by one, however, they leave her: the sons are scattered abroad; some settle in humble occupations, others are rovers, and enter the army or seek their fortunes at sea; the daughters in their turns engage in domestic service, or in manufactories, from whence, in the course of nature, (as it is in low life) they are duly married off; and while she is growing old, her immediate successors are transmigrating through the same stages of poverty and trial, to the same consummation of wretchedness as she and her husband passed before them, and through which their descendants are doomed to follow them. Every year they

are further removed, and estranged from her, or have additional burthens and expences of their own to bear. Thus every year she is more deserted; and her helps fail just in proportion as her strength declines, her infirmities increase, and assistance from others becomes indispensable to her wellbeing.

At length, worn down with bodily exertions and long suffering; broken in spirits, and bowed under a weight of years; without a relative beneath her roof,—if she have yet a roof to shelter her,—except perhaps a grandchild or two, whose parents are in the grave, and whom she has to nurse and feed, when she herself ought to be nursed and fed like an infant,—she lingers out to the latest period of decay in penury and sickness, with just food enough to make her feel unceasingly the yearnings of hunger, and clothing enough to make the lack of more a grievous discomfort. Yet so mysteriously and mercifully mingled is the cup of life, that there is sweetness at the end of the bitterest draught, and the very dregs of it are drained with

delight by those to whom "the evil days are come, and the years when they say we have no pleasure in them." These few general outlines, with little comparative variation, might be filled up with the features of each particular case in "the short and simple annals" of thousands of poor old women breathing at this day the air of heaven, and loving the warmth of the sun, if they cannot see his beams,—so as to form perfect biographical resemblances of all.

The aged and unprovided females of the present day are also in less favourable circumstances than, it may be hoped, those who are treading in the steps of womanhood after them, to the same extremity of helplessness, are likely to be placed in when they arrive there. Formerly there were few Christian and benevolent institutions for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the poor; no societies among their superiors for bettering their condition, and more effectually helping them, by teaching them to help themselves. Such genuine charities are now both nu-

merous and flourishing throughout the land. Those, therefore, of the feebler sex, who now form the advanced guard in the march of human life, and already verge on the confines of the grave, having passed that limit beyond which mortal strength is declared by the voice of inspiration to be "labour and sorrow,"—those who are thus circumstanced, at this time, have fewer resources and consolations than their successors are either wisely preparing for themselves, or by anticipation enjoying through the beneficence of others. There is, therefore, the greater need to urge with importunity the practice of that part of "pure and undefiled religion," which is "to visit the widows in their affliction;" seeing that a few more seasons will utterly sweep away the living race of old women, and hurry them beyond the reach of wrong or compassion from their fellow-creatures.

But independent of casual disadvantages, these sufferers, in their lowest state, have a peculiar claim, on account of their sex, on the

veneration and gratitude of both sexes; — a claim on their own, springing from the purest sympathies of a sister-nature; a claim on ours, founded on the strongest obligation that can bind one being to another, — the obligation of birth. When the Almighty had taken Eve from the side of the man whom He had created, and brought her unto him, Adam said, "This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh." The debt which the first woman thus owed to the first man, her daughters have been repaying through all generations. Every son of Adam has been born of a woman, and beholden for his very substance to a mother; from the fountain of whose blood his veins were first filled, and from the pulsation of whose heart vital motion was first communicated to his own: — of every one, therefore, who assumes to be an hereditary lord of this nether creation, woman may say as literally as Adam said to Eve, — "This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh." — "*Man that is born of a woman!*" is so beautiful, and tender, and solemn an

expression, that in the whole compass of language, there is not another, connected with terrestrial existence, that awakens deeper feeling, that associates so many affecting ideas, or comprehends more of what is lovely, and awful, and dear, in alliance with our social nature; while it touches with personal application every individual of the species. That the reader may be left in a tone of mind most happily prepared for every good word and work, these remarks shall be concluded with a repetition of the heart-searching and heart-melting expression, together with the context, which may be emphatically applied, in every image and sentiment, to the aged and desolate widow,—"Man," as a generic term, including all the race of Adam, whether male or female.

"Man, that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble.

"He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.

" As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up;

" So man lieth down and riseth not: — till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep."

THE LIFE OF A FLOWER,

BY ITSELF;

IN TWO LETTERS TO A LADY.

LETTER I.

My dear Madam,

Do not ask me by what means a flower has contrived to write its own history. How in the course of my short life,—one week, five days, nine hours and twenty-three minutes, at this moment,—I learned so much of men and things, as to qualify me to tell you my little tale in language intelligible to beings so exalted in the scale of creation as you are, you will hear in the sequel. I can assure you, on the word of one among innumerable millions of a race by whom a lie was never told since Adam plucked the first flower in Paradise,—and that, you know, was before he was married,—that every syllable of the fol-

lowing record is as true as that I myself ever lived. Who has lent me his pen, as amanuensis on this occasion, I shall not tell; for if you are not sufficiently well acquainted with the hand-writing at once to recognise it as that of a friend, he has deceived me, or you have deceived him. I have only to premise further, that if there be any thing in my narrative unworthy of a violet, or what a violet could not have known, spoken, or done, you will be pleased to attribute it to his ignorant or impertinent interpolation.

I do not recollect being born, nor do I remember my parents; for we violets being only spring-flowers die nine months before our children come into the world. But this is idle prating; for, to tell the truth, there are no such things as fathers and mothers among us: we love ourselves, and our posterity are the offspring of self-love; consequently, there can be no fear of our own issue failing, while this ruling passion is the universal inheritance of all our tribe. The first event that I can call to mind was, the fall of an icicle from the

old oak tree, under which I grew, upon my head, when it was no bigger than a pin's. The pain of this uncouth accident was to me the earliest consciousness of existence; I was then, according to the best chronology, exactly eight and forty hours old, by the church-clock of our parish, which struck six, A. M. just as the icicle was shaken from a branch above, by the sudden rising on the wing of a crow, that had roosted on it all night, and who, having overslept himself, was startled out of a pleasant dream, by the report of a gun, which farmer Gripe's son fired at him over the adjacent hedge. As the poor bird lost nothing but the remainder of his nap, and his tail, which was shot sheer away, he will not be any worse, or wiser either, for the misadventure;—the feathers will grow again, no doubt; and so far from profiting by the warning, I saw him sitting on the very same bough, the day before yesterday, and cawing as if he were king of the region. This happened on the third of April, 1814; I therefore conclude that I must have been born on the

first,—as good a day as can be found in the whole calendar, for the coming forth of a flower.

From the instant that sense and reason were thus awakened in me, I became a quick and diligent observer of all that passed within me and around, so far as opportunities were afforded for gratifying my curiosity and improving my mind. The authentic particulars respecting the crow and the icicle above mentioned, I was told, while yet smarting under the pain of the accident, by my neighbour and gossip, a withered sprig of spear-grass, which had already outlived two winters, and was notoriously the greatest gossip that grew for ten fields round. By this merry blade I was taught the rudiments of useful knowledge; and whether you believe me or not, I will venture to affirm that my preceptress was as good a schoolmistress as any old woman of eighty within the ring of our bells, and myself as good a scholar, at the week's end, as any little boy or girl three hundred times my age, and ten thousand times my bulk. During my mi-

nority, that is, till my blossom opened, I was blind; and in truth I had then only two of the five senses by which you animals vainly imagine that you are distinguished above us vegetables: but let me tell you, that I could feel as exquisitely as yourself, Madam. Indeed, I doubt whether an icicle a quarter of an inch long, falling upon your head, would have cost you half the anguish, that such an infliction cost me. And as for hearing, certainly you will not pretend to measure your ears with mine: I dare say you never heard a stalk of grass speak, in your life; I have heard one uttering oracles all day long,—aye, and all night too; for my neighbour talked as much in her sleep and as much to the purpose, as when she was awake.

Now while I was blind, I had nothing to do but to grow wiser and bigger every day;—bigger I did grow, for I could not help it, and wiser,—but I must not boast, lest I should prove myself a fool: I may say, however, that I do not recollect that I ever lost a moment in all my schooling, with the old bel-

dame of our bank-side, or under a much higher and more accomplished tutor, at whose feet I was brought up, and by whom I was as carefully instructed, as if, instead of a few spring-days, my life was to equal your grandmother's. This august and venerable personage was no other than a majestic oak, that had outlasted twenty generations of your long-lived race, and five hundred of ours; nay, it had stood so long against the strokes of time and death, that it had survived two-thirds of itself, being only a ruin, yet even in decay more magnificent than a forest of brambles in their glory. This oak, which was, or pretended to be, — for I could not help suspecting some unacknowledged gaps in the avenue of his genealogy, my honoured tutor having only one weak point about him, and that was a certain pride of ancestry incomprehensible to us ephemeral things, — a very commendable pride, you will perhaps say, in the stump of an old tree! — Be it so, — but I must begin the last sentence again. — This oak, which was, or pretended to be, the twelfth in de-

scent from one that grew on the same slope at the creation, was a marvellous linguist, having in the course of its own five centuries, acquired all the knowledge that had been accumulated in its family, and transmitted by due inheritance from sire to son, for nearly six thousand years. Hence it understood every dialect spoken throughout earth, sky, and ocean, by stones, plants, and animals, fire, air, and every thing, up to the sun, moon, and stars themselves; one of its ancestors having flourished in the age of Esop, when all these were wont to speak audibly and rationally, learned their various tongues, and left to its posterity the secret of conversing with them, after all voices except your own had become silent, or unintelligible to your talkative species. This secret, I apprehend, lies in the wind; for that being itself an universal language, and blowing from all quarters, the oak and its forefathers had heard in succession the whole history of the world, in all ages and nations, and in every idiom of speech that imagination ever gave to living or inanimate

nature. Oaks, indeed, were always famous for their wisdom, even among the wisest of men. Did not the oak of Dodona, inspired by Jupiter himself, speak most excellent Greek? And did not your ancestors, the Druids, believe that the spirit of prophecy dwelt in the oaks of our own country? My tutor's great grandfather, who was contemporary with these hierophants, was a renowned soothsayer; and the misletoe that grew upon his boughs was deemed the most potent for incantations of any that could be found in the island. This reminds me that there is a puny tuft of this parasite hanging over my head, which brags of a lineage in perpendicular descent from that renowned stock. The toad-stools that batten in the decayed hollows of the old oak may as well boast of being sprung from the same root with himself.

I am sick of this family-pride, as every body who has no family to be proud of must be, when it comes to remind him that he is no body. My Royal Oak, however, was very kind and condescending to me; and

from his sage lessons I learned as much of the works of nature and art, of the actions of animals human and brute, of ethics and English grammar, as you might suppose a violet of tolerable parts, improving every instant, could acquire in ten days; so that when I came of age on the eleventh, I was prepared to begin the world to advantage, having pretty clear ideas of every thing I might expect to behold when the universe became visible to me,—for you will recollect that I was blind during the whole of my nonage.

At sun-rise, on the eleventh of April, my eyelids were opened on the creation; and in the same moment when I first saw the light, I first breathed the air, fresh, cool, and fragrant, amidst a thick group of sister-violets, "stealing and giving odours," as the breeze of morning swept the dew-drops from our leaves. Heretofore I had only felt the warmth of the sun, and the pleasantness of the breeze cherishing and expanding my bud; now the light of heaven seemed to dart not only into

my eye, but through my veins down into my very root, and the spirit of the wind was like a living soul within me. If I do not remember the moment of my birth, *this* moment I should never forget, were I to live to the age of the oak. Amidst the innumerable objects, all beautiful and new, above and around, — the birds flitting through the air, the insects creeping among the herbage, the flowers of many hues that blossomed on my native bank, mine ancient gossip, the spire of dry grass with two withered blades hanging down, and high over all, the patriarchal oak, towering, and, as it appeared to me, touching the sky, — nothing caught my attention longer than while I cast a glance across it. As soon as I had looked thus hastily about me, I fixed my eye on the sun, coming forth from his golden palace: — as he rose in the firmament, my petals spread wider to receive his ray, and my breath grew sweeter; while I sighed in the delight of beholding him all day long, with the occasional intervention

of a cloud, and the floating shadows of taller plants around that alternately crossed and cleared my sight, I traced the splendid luminary in his course to the meridian, and downward through a crimson-coloured sky, till behind the old oak he vanished from me. I felt my lively spirits sinking as he declined: when he was gone, vision began to fade; the objects near me lost their colour, then their form; I was alarmed; I thought that my primitive blindness was returning; the air grew chill; I bowed upon my bed, and oppressed with indescribable dejection, I fell into a deep slumber.

Thanks to the sweet deceiver, Sleep! In my dream (for flowers dream as well as sleep, whatever botanists may say), the glorious image of the sun arose on my imagination, and I spent my day over again in the night. From this delicious trance, I was awakened by strains of music so inspiring, that I found myself and my sisters involuntarily,—and yet, Oh! how willingly!—dancing with all our leaves and blossoms to

the melody, which came nearer, and grew merrier every moment. There was a very pale twilight in the air, when glancing upward, I perceived a dark cloud with a silver margin; in the middle of which there appeared a bright spot, that became thinner and thinner, as if melting away, till a beautiful orb broke through it. It was the moon, a little on the wane, which had risen after my eye closed, and was now half-way up the sky. She was not so gorgeous as the sun; but in the first joy of discovering her, I thought her a thousand times more lovely; for just then I recollected, that while I was falling asleep, I had fancied that I was losing my sight. In the transport of having *this* restored, I had no ear for the music: I was all eye, and that eye was all moon, for I saw nothing else; till suddenly her beams appeared alive, and in motion towards me. Millions, aye millions, of little beings, in form like the lords of creation, and as brilliant as if they had been born in ladies' eyes, came pouring upon our bank-side, and covered

it as thick as dew-drops. The music, which was as much too exquisite for human ears as these shapes were too fine for human sight, continued meanwhile to swell and fall, and float, and quicken, and languish. It seemed a moving spirit among these lively little things; sometimes they ran out in lines all the way up to the moon and back again; anon they wheeled in rings so swift as to be individually indistinguishable; again they intermingled in measures so slow, that every feature of the smallest face was easily discerned. Love, joy, grief, hope, fear, and every passion, were expressed in their countenances, carolled in their songs, and represented in their dances. They flew among us and over us, with steps so light that we bent not our heads beneath their volatile feet; but when they touched us we felt in ourselves the very affection, whether joyous or mournful, that possessed them at the time. It would take more hours than I have to live, to describe all the scenes of this wonderful spectacle; — it was a pantomime in miniature of your great world, in

which all the horrors and glories of war, the labours and pastimes of peace, the business of the field, the court, the senate, the bar, the college, the town, and the country, were at once exemplified. In a word, there was then presented to us a perfect masquerade of human life, the details of which the reverend oak expounded to me and my sisters (for the rest of our vegetable neighbours were asleep), the next morning; and though a violet's existence is computed by minutes instead of years, I thought it worth while having been born a flower to see this.

But the charm was abruptly broken by a hideous scaring noise directly over our heads. "Tohoo! Tohoo! Tohoo!" it cried, and forth from the hollow of the oak issued a giant of a screech-owl. Plumb into the midst of the rejoicing assembly he plunged, when all the fays and fairies (for so I understand they are called in the language of men), with a sound as if the strings of a thousand musical instruments were at once snapt asunder, vanished in the twinkling of a

dew-drop, — except Robin Goodfellow, the merriest elf among them all, who had been playing his antics with me and my sisters all night, and was then standing on his head, fiddling with his legs in the air, on one of my topmost petals. Neck and heels, in his fright, poor Robin! he tumbled, a height of three statute-inches at least, into the hollow of one of my footleaves, where he lay stunned for a full half-second, and then I saw no more of him.

The owl, with another cry of triumph more horrible than the first, hurried back to his den among the ivy of the oak; the moon was beclouded, and I fell asleep again. Lest you should do the same, — or rather that you may do the same, — Madam, I will here make a break in my narrative to you. But I must continue it by myself, and bequeath the remainder to you in my will; for though I am up to the neck in water, — the only means of prolonging my life, after I had been mortally wounded by one of the fairest hands in the world, as you will learn here-

after,—I feel that I shall not live till to-morrow morning. Meanwhile, and with my sweetest breath, and last, I am,

Yours, *for ever*,

VIOLA.

LETTER II.

Dear Madam,

I did not awake out of this second sleep till the sun had given his own colour and lustre to the morning-clouds; but the dew, into which an early hoar-frost had resolved itself, lay white upon the ground, and there was a globule, as big as a lady's tear, in my eye, that entirely filled it. Through this delusive lens, the sun, the sky, the earth, appeared so near me, that I thought every thing I saw was a part of myself, and that from being a poor little violet, I had grown into the whole universe. Intoxicated with this magnificent conceit,—"Bless me!" said I, "what shall I be next!" But the warm

sunbeams quickly exhaled the dew-drop, revealed nature again in her true beauty and proportion, and reduced me to my original insignificance. The lives of flowers are too short to be spent in ill-humour: I had no time to be unhappy; mortified on the one hand, I sought comfort on the other, and I soon found it.

Yesterday I had been so rapt into the heavens, that I scarcely deigned to cast a look upon the earth. To-day, however, I leisurely surveyed the aspect of my native country, so far as my bounded vision could reach, being an horizon of which the old oak occupied the whole western frontier: on the north it was narrowed by a copse of hazels; eastward the landscape stretched away into distance, being thrice the length of your parasol, and skirted with an immense forest of sting-nettles; to the south the bank sloped gently, till it abruptly terminated in a precipice, not less than six and twenty inches of perpendicular descent, as I have been told by travellers,—certain intelligent ants who had explored

that tremendous region; below which ran a solitary lane, the favourite walk of—you know whom. The bank-side was uneven with stones embedded in the soil, and rough roots rising above it, alternately bare and enamelled with moss;—tufts of primroses flourished under the hazels; here and there a sprouting fern pushed its curled horns through the earth, while daisies, butter-cups, sorrel, and strawberry bloom, were scattered profusely among clusters of docks, and infant thistles, that spread their radiated leaves like stars among the grass. A few wood-anemonies and wild hyacinths added their elegance and grace to the diversified scene. My sisters and I formed the only knot of violets on the ground. We sprang from fifty roots, and presented as many buds and blooms, on the south-east side of the oak, that opened its cloven trunk towards us. Though only the wreck of itself, this tree was still the mightiest of created things to me; and from the breadth of its base it appeared to have a greater mass of roots below the ground than there re-

mained of stem and top above. The bark was hoary with lichens, or covered with ivy, that hung also in long tresses from the lower branches, clothing them with verdure not their own, for their season of foliage was not yet come; but they told me themselves that when they put forth their leaves and had matured their acorns, neither flower nor fruit in the universe could equal them in beauty. I might have believed this literally, if I had not heard, five minutes afterwards, one of the innumerable funguses that rioted on its decaying core, say that a perfect toad-stool was the loveliest object under the sun. I had almost forgot to observe, that the uppermost boughs of the oak had been dead for a century; yet still they stretched their naked arms towards the sky, challenging the lightnings that often had stricken them.

It would be tiresome to both of us, my dear Madam, were I to tell you all the petty incidents of that day, or detail the conversations between myself and my sisters, as well as our comrades, that flowered in groups or

on solitary stalks along the bank. Believe me, it was quite as pleasant, and perhaps as philosophical, as discourse in general is among your species, at theatres, on race-courses, at levees, or in ball-rooms,—though I am very willing to grant that it was not comparable, either in wit or wisdom, to the tea-table talk of your most communicative sex. At half-past nine o'clock in the fore-noon, a butterfly, the first that I had seen,—indeed the first of the season,—came fluttering over us. Our chat was immediately suspended, and every eye followed the brilliant stranger, while he sported to and fro displaying his elegant form and gay apparel in every attitude; hovering here, descending there, alighting no where. We violets breathed our sighs of sweetness to allure him; the daisies,—poor things, how I pitied them!—blushed to the tips of their petals, for it was plain that he despised them; the primroses shivered with spleen, for they were in the shade, and he never went near them; the butter-cups blazed out in golden splendour,

and they seemed his favorites, for now he dipt towards one, then towards another of them, till, to the chagrin and astonishment of all, he at length settled on a glaring yellow dandelion, the *vulgarest* flower on the bank,—with which not one of us would even exchange a word: and there he sate in the sun, opening and shutting his burnished wings, with ineffable self-complacency; for it was soon evident that the coxcomb chose the gaudy weed, not for the love of it, but because its broad disk afforded him a convenient resting-place, on which he could expand his gold and purple finery to the admiration, as he thought, of all that beheld him. We were so provoked, that we tried to look any way and every way, rather than at him; and yet we caught our eyes continually turning, as it were by instinct, again to him, for really he was a very pretty fellow, and would have been a thousand times more so if he had not known it. At last he whisked away. O then you should have seen how demurely we squinted at each other; and not one was

mistaken in reading disappointment in the countenances of all the rest, but each was self-deceived in imagining that she could hide her own mortification from them.

We were very silent and pouting for nearly an hour, when a bee came humming along the lane; and as soon as he had wheeled round the corner of the old oak, darted down upon one of us,—it was upon me. I was frightened out of my wits, the assailant seemed so rough and warlike in form; nay, so unceremonious were his manners, if manners they could be called, that he instantaneously saluted me, bore me down to the ground, and began sucking my breath till I was ready to faint; then off he flew, singing as he went, without noticing another blossom on the bank. When I had a little recovered from the confusion occasioned by this rencontre, I perceived that my neighbours were all sneering at me, and sneering so enviously that I soon found,—instead of being angry at the honest bee, for rifling my honey, I ought to have thanked him for his condescen-

sion in taking it by storm; and it was evident, to me at least, from *his* preference and *their* jealousy, that I was the sweetest and handsomest flower of the party. This notion so delighted my vanity, that I became quite giddy, and eyed my companions whom nature had made less attractive than myself, with a kind of compassionate contempt. Down from a branch of the oak, that moment, fell a great sprawling spider full on my bosom, where he lay wriggling on his back, five seconds I am sure,—an age of misery to me!—before he could gather his legs together, and throw himself, rolled up like a ball, on one of my lowest leaves; where he remained to my unutterable annoyance, considering how he should further dispose of himself. The flowers, which had been hitherto stifling their spleen against me, or muttering it in low whispers, now tittered aloud at this ridiculous mischance, while I was so paralyzed that I could not even cry out for help.

Looking round in consternation for some

deliverer, I perceived in a black hole at the root of the tree, two eyes of fire, glowing through the darkness. They were pointed directly at me; they were in motion; they approached; and slowly from his den crawled forth a monster more misshapen than even my fear had imagined it, — a bloated, blotched, crook-backed, splay-footed toad! His eyes indeed were beautiful; but they only rendered his person, (if I may use the expression,) more hideous, by being placed amidst such loathsome deformity. When he had extricated his unwieldy paunch from his winter lodgings, he made an awkward jump towards me, apparently to seize the spider, which still lay like a nightmare upon my foot-stalk, withering me with horror. The toad missed his aim, and sate heaving his flaccid sides, to gather breath for another leap. Meanwhile the spider, aware of the peril, scrambled off among my saucy companions; and I could track his course under their leaves by their shrinking as he touched them, till he fairly buried himself amidst the group of primroses,

throwing the whole family into hysterics, by his abominable presence;—and in truth they deserved the punishment, for they had been by far the most malicious in their reflections on me and my gallant, the humble bee. But I was not in a state to enjoy their distress; for I was still agonized at the sight of the toad, who remained some five or six minutes longer, staring me full in the face, gasping for wind, and sickening me with his pestilent breath. He then hopped aside; but by some fatality missing the edge of the bank, he toppled headlong down the precipice into the lane. We saw him no more; but the oak, whose branches overhung the steep, told us, that a leaden-coloured, nimble-bodied, yard-long snake, darting from a heap of rotten straw, under the opposite hedge, in which he had a nest, seized the poor toad as he lay on his back, bewildered by the fall, and, with no small trouble to both of them, swallowed him up. Swift vengeance, however, followed; for the snake had scarcely gulped down his live meal, when he was attacked by a school boy, turn-

ing that instant out of a cross-road, with a hazel-switch in his hand. The snake, having no stomach, either to fight or fly, after such a dinner, was soon killed, and carried off by the conquerer, hanging upon the stick which had been the instrument of death, and then displayed the trophy of his valour.

It was now noon; the morning had been warm, but the clouds were gathering thick above us; and the weather-wise oak assured us, on the faith of certain portentous twinges in the knobs of his root, (perhaps when you are an old woman, and I wish you may live to be one, you will understand the nature of these ill omens by the stinging of your corns,) that there would be rain; indeed the appearance of the toad prognosticated such a visitation, if we had been better acquainted with his habits. My amanuensis tells me, that the latter is a questionable point, and that the appearance of these reptiles is rather an evidence that there has been a shower than that there will be one. But it is my business to record facts, not to philosophize upon

them; — so I proceed. There was scarcely a breath of air through the afternoon; all nature seemed to be at rest, as in the depth of night, except on our bank-side, where we were thrown into miserable consternation, by the outcries of the dandelion on which the butterfly had formerly perched. It grew on an eminence hard by the forest of nettles, which I mentioned before; and there were various traditions in our country concerning this mount. Some people said it was an artificial hill, which a giant who had lived under ground had thrown up for his habitation in a remote age, and where it was supposed his posterity still resided; according to others, it was an extinct volcano, — what that is, I presume you know, but I do not. The most rational opinion, however, (and it is mine,) was, that in the days of fable, this was the Olympus of our classical region, on which Jove and his boon companions were wont to quaff nectar out of acorn cups, manufactured by an ancestor of the old oak; and whence also on summer evenings, the

gay divinities, and even the muses and graces, as I have been told, were wont to descend upon the lower grounds to dance with our great grannams, the flowers of two thousand generations back. — Now the dandelion had scarcely congratulated herself and laughed us to scorn, on account of the triumph which she fancied she had obtained in winning the heart of the beau-butterfly, (believe me, Madam, he had no heart at all,) from all the belles of the bank-side, when she felt an alarming pain at her root. For three hours it continued, with convulsions under ground, yet regularly tending upward; till at length, by the trembling of the dandelion when every thing else was still, and the crumbling of the soil, which rose and broke on the surface, it was evident to us all, that there was an earthquake, and that the earthquake was growing more and more violent every instant. Though none of us had any pity for the poor dandelion, which now fell headlong from its place, like an uprooted tree, we were in terrible consternation for ourselves, not knowing how

far the ruin thus begun might be extended. While we were all in breathless suspense of expectation, to see what the mountain in labour would bring forth, the soil on the spot heaving as if it were alive, — slowly out of the midst arose a strange animal. It was coal-black, had a swine's snout, human hands, and a body like a bear; — I believe you call it a mole, and may laugh at our terrors; but, my dear lady, only imagine yourself rooted in the ground, as we flowers were, and a monster, such as I have described, a hundred times bigger than yourself, emerging from the earth, and reeling towards you, blind indeed, but snuffing his prey, and led to it by the infallible instinct of his nose, — truly, madam, methinks you would deem it no laughing matter. Our whole population shrunk upon their beds, and shrieked out so loud, that the old oak who was taking an afternoon nap, was startled from his sleep, and snarlingly enquired, what was the matter. Not one of us had courage to answer, but he soon discovered the cause of our fright,

and with his usual good humour bade us not to be afraid.

At this crisis, the clouds, which had long been lowering, broke suddenly, and poured down rain in torrents on our heads. The mole, neither liking the air nor the water from above, burrowed his way back again into his subterranean abode, without doing any harm, except humbling the pride of the dandelion, for which we were all very much obliged to him. It was only an April storm; towards evening, the sun broke through the gloom, and spread a beautiful rainbow from one end of heaven to the other, as it appeared to me. The blue sky cleared, the earth glowed with verdure; every leaf and sprig of plant and flower, glittered with diamonds of the first water. All nature looked smiling and joyous. The gnats, by myriads, were dancing in circular clouds over our heads, repeatedly assembling though as often dispersed by the swallows that darted to and fro in the open space between the hedges of the lane, and sometimes skimmed athwart

our bank, bending our heads with their delicate breasts, or striking the dew-drops out of our bells, with sudden touches of the tips of their wings. A blackbird, perched on the old oak, chaunted in his loudest notes a simple tale, about a few sticks and straws in a neighbouring wood, which he and his true-love had gathered in the rambles of their courtship, and woven into what they called a nest, where five chirpers had been disclosed from the shells that very morning,. This had awakened, for the first time since he himself was hatched, all the rapturous tenderness of a parent in his heart, from the fulness of which he poured forth such a song as made me wish that I had been born "with such a pair of wings" as his, "and such a head between 'em;" for that little home was all the world to him;—aye, and he had a right to be happy in his own way, and to tell every body of his happiness, though none besides himself cared a straw about either his nest, his mate, or his young ones. Meanwhile the firmament above rang with the carolling of larks; the thrushes

answered each other from tree to tree; and in the hedges, linnets, chaffinches, and wrens were playing on their small pipes as many tunes as there were minstrels among them, yet forming one harmonious concert. Above all, the cuckoo, continually changing his place, but never changing his note, made glad the ear that hearkened to him, while the eye in vain sought him out. All was peace and concord around, and we flowers, forgetting our little enmities and rivalships, enjoyed the breeze that mingled our sweets, and wafted them as incense to heaven.

In the height of our festivity, a little company of human beings, the first whom I had seen above the rank of milk-boys, jolting along on their asses, with barrels, and an occasional clodpole, in his smock frock, "whistling as he went for want of thought," —a little company of human beings, consisting of yourself, and a few of your friends of either sex, came sauntering down the lane. While I was gazing with delightful astonishment on the apparition, one of you—I won't

say who—stept aside, and plucked me. O the pang of that separation! may you never feel one so sharp, or, if you must, may it be as momentary;—for the next instant I was the happiest flower in the world;—it was a lady who had plucked me, and she placed me in her bosom. There I should have been content to die, but, whether my brain was turned by my good fortune, or whether the south-wind was envious of my felicity, and blew me away, certain it is, that I had no great cause to be proud of the lady's partiality, for she was so regardless of me, that, before I had gone ten paces, I "fell from my high estate," and what mortified me most was—she never missed me. Then, indeed, had I perished miserably in the dust, or been trampled to death by some hob-nailed shoe, had not another personage in your train,—he who has acted as my amanuensis in writing these memoirs,—picked me up, carried me home, and placed me in a lachrymatory, filled, as he assures me, with pure Castalia dew, in

which I have lived long enough to tell you the fable of my life, and, with my dying words, to say, that if you find no moral in it, the fault is not mine. Farewell.

VIOLA.

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY.

LONDON is so immense a city, that a stranger going thither finds himself soon bewildered in attempting to thread its mazes, or comprehend its grandeur. Though there may be no place in the world in which a coxcomb struts with more self-importance, there is none where a thinking being will more completely feel his insignificance. He is but one of the integers that make up a million, and which, in the arithmetical expression of that sum, are all sunk under a solitary figure and six ciphers—1,000,000,—though, perhaps, his individual number on the roll-call might be no less than 999,999! Like a drop of rain falling from the cloud into the ocean, his personal identity seems absorbed in the abstract idea of multitude perpetually realized, and perpetually changing, before his eyes.

Stand where he will, and as long as he may, in the heart of this great capital, the double tide of passing and re-passing people rolls in counter-currents beside him, and though the persons that compose it are disappearing every moment, still he beholds the stream,

"Which runs, and as it runs for ever will run on."
COWLEY.

In the contemplation of these phenomena, a fanciful spectator, like myself, may easily imagine that he is a living consciousness alone, without corporeal frame; for, except the mechanical jostling which he must encounter, he might be invisible for aught any body about him either knows or cares, — so utterly is he overlooked by others, and yet so marvellously enlarged and enlightened appears the faculty of vision in himself, from the multiplicity of objects and infinity of associations continually exhibited to his eye, and crowding through his mind. Not the dream of Belinda herself was fuller of enchanting bustle and perplexity:

" There wigs with wigs, with sword-knots sword-knots strive,
Beaux banish beaux, and coaches coaches drive."

Rape of the Lock.

Now, as in the streets the animal motion is perpetual, so within the houses the course of business, of pleasure, of study, of riot, with the vicissitudes of relaxation, disgust, repose, and exhaustion, holds on without any interruption in the general progress, though every hour cuts off some of the actors engaged in it, and introduces new adventurers upon the scene. To come to particulars. In Fleet Street and the Strand, every evening after sun-set, there is a tawdry shew of prostitutes in the way,—fallen spirits themselves, seeking to seduce others into like ruin,—and doing it for bread. At the Old Bailey, on the first day of every session, there is a black calendar of prisoners awaiting their trials for every kind of crime. How comes it that the walks of infamy in the first instance, and the receptacles of culprits in the second, are supplied with so incessant an influx of new and miserable transgressors,

since from the very character of their respective callings, and the judicial penalties attached to the same by the laws of nature and society, the days of the present tenants must be few as well as evil; the former being rapidly swept away by the pestilence in which they breathe, and the latter struck down by the sword of justice, which pursues them day and night, like the weapon in the hand of a destroying angel?

The answer is obvious; — as every rank, trade, and profession in the civil community, is perpetuated by the silent and imperceptible succession of generations, springing up, and sliding into the places of their parents and predecessors, as these fall away; so that, without the invidious prescriptions of *caste*, no chasm or suspension occurs in any one of the occupations of life; — in like manner, the untimely and violent mortality among harlots and felons is steadily counteracted by a corresponding energy of exertion among the abandoned and incorrigible slaves of passion and cupidity, to train up children in the way

wherein they should *not* go, who shall inherit their vices, and tread in their steps when they are no more; and thus furnish the stews and the prisons, the hulks and the gallows, with perennial prey.

This mystery of iniquity works so effectually, that a man standing in one of the public paths of the metropolis on any night of the year, when the daughters of shame are parading to and fro, with artificial beauty painted on distempered cheeks, and laughing loud amidst heart-sickness, to feign the joy they cannot feel, and hide the woe they dare not utter:—any man, thus standing and witnessing this scene of gaiety and despair, on the broad road that leads down to destruction, might exclaim, in the spirit of all but infallible prophecy;—"Poor Victims! decked with garlands, and perfumed with essences for the sacrifice, the place that knows you now shall soon know you no more; yet will that place have lost none of its attractions by your removal; others yet innocent will be wronged as you have been, and in their frenzy and re-

venge will turn like you upon mankind, and become tempters and destroyers to that sex, from which they and you have experienced unnatural perfidy and cruelty, instead of tenderness, love, and protection. There are in this great city thousands of female children already initiated in the principles of debauchery, and preparing to be brought out upon this stage, when you have played your part. Aye and behind the scenes, there are those, your sisters in profligacy, but not yet in misfortune, who, though they are clothed in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day, — though they ride in the gilt chariot, and shine in the dress circle, — ere long must be outcasts from the palaces which they inhabit, and drag their emaciated limbs through these highways into the darkest alleys and most obscene haunts of prostitution. There are, too, in remote villages, hundreds of infants, some at this moment smiling on the knees of virtuous mothers, whose hearts they will one day break; others learning the truths of religion in Sunday schools, which they will

live to despise, though they can never forget them; but more, far more, the offspring of ignorant, idle, impious parents, influenced only by wicked example, — all of whom, in the course of a few years, were I to take my standing here again, I should see in your garb, in your condition, under your condemnation. Nay, were I to dart a look, — but I dare not, — were I to dart a look of agonized fear, down the vista of futurity, thronged with apparitions of beings coming into existence, I might prognosticate that myriads of these unborn shadows, when they shall have put on mortality, will swarm along these paths of ruin, — and in their turns be as deceived and deceiving, as merry and as wretched as you have been."

The same grave personage, whom we have imagined making this portentous soliloquy, might next turn to Newgate, take up his parable there, and in the same strain of melancholy anticipation, foretell the occupancy of its dungeons and its drop, by murderers and thieves, some already in their youth, and

ripe for committal, others in their nonage and passing from the lowest to the highest forms in schools of ignominy; while myriads and myriads are yet in the womb of time, and of whom it may hereafter be said, "Better would it have been for these had they never been born." — And is this the actual and the prospective state of two classes of society, two numerous classes, in the metropolis of Britain, every day of every year? Who can consider the systematic propagation of vice, and its concomitant suffering in such a place, by a fatality so unfailing, without emotions of the deepest horror and the warmest pity?

Nor is this plague confined to London. The large manufacturing towns are nurseries for metropolitan profligacy, as well as for home-consumption in the bodies and souls of human beings, devoted from their cradles to work all manner of wickedness greedily. If crimes, however, have multiplied, since the commencement of the late war, even beyond the proportionate increase of population, it must be acknowledged that they are generally

committed with less atrocity of violence. The practice of villainy itself partakes of the advanced refinement of the age, though it is no recommendation of that practice, to trace its improvement to the earlier initiation of children in its secrets, and the more frequent employment of *their* agency in executing its purposes. Want of education, the evil habits of parents, the lessons of idle companions, sabbath-breaking, gambling for halfpence, frequenting low taverns, and, above all, the indiscriminate association of children of both sexes in daily labours, as well as in occasional mischief and revelry, are the common auspices under which juvenile delinquency is begun and consummated. By such means boys and girls from their infancy are corrupted, and gradually led on, emboldened and hardened as they proceed, from sin to sin, till they are fit for any thing that makes them unfit to live and more unfit to die. It is true, that in provincial towns, prostitution does not often walk the streets with that repulsive effrontery which it assumes

in the capital, nor can the petty gangs of thieves in their teens in such places boast, that they have among them many choice spirits who have twice or thrice escaped the gallows, on account of their youth alone; but it must be granted, that they are not more behind their London kindred in depravity and adroitness, than might be expected from their lack of the opportunities which those have enjoyed who were bred in the purlieus of the court and the city. The following authentic circumstance will exemplify this puerile rivalry, in the heroism of profligacy. In a certain country town, one dark evening, two boys went into a shop, the master of which, among other small wares in which he dealt, was accustomed to furnish silver for notes to the neighbouring manufacturers at a small premium. On pretence of wanting change, the rogues induced the young woman who attended, to bring out a bag containing about thirty pounds in value, of silver coin and tokens. This was no sooner laid on the compter than one of the dexterous knaves seized it

before her face, and both darting out of the shop with the prize into the midst of a groupe of their companions, who were waiting at the window, they all scampered off in different directions, so that when the poor girl had recovered sufficiently from her surprize at the boldness of the theft, to run out and give the alarm, pursuit was hopeless. Not long afterwards one of the graceless gang was apprehended on another charge, when he confessed having borne a part in this buccaneering enterprize, and stated that he and his accomplices had contrived to squander the whole of the treasure in less than a week, by drinking and dissipation in base public houses, and the haunts of abandoned persons of the other sex. The party consisted of lads from twelve to sixteen years of age, so destitute or so neglected, that during this debauch they were wont to sleep or rather litter at nights by some coke-fires near the neighbouring coal-pits.

Another instance (a double one) of premature depravity will show that vice of the

direst kind is not peculiar to populous cities or manufacturing districts, but may sometimes be found in the last places where a poet, at least, would think of looking for it. Hannah * * * * * was only sixteen years of age when she committed a crime for which human justice required and took away her life. That crime was the greatest which can be committed;—it was murder, and murder under circumstances the most atrocious. She was convicted of poisoning Jane * * * * * apparently from no other motive than the idle hope of obtaining, by her removal, the menial situation in a family which the deceased held, and which she herself had formerly occupied, but had been turned away, on account of her morose and uncontrollably bad temper. The deed had been long premeditated; she carried the poison with which she designed to accomplish it, and did accomplish it, at length,—she carried the poison about with her for ten months.—The person whom she destroyed was her companion, and she destroyed her by an act that purported to be an act of

kindness. She gave her a cake as a token of friendship.—During the long interval while she bore the poison about her person, and the murder in her heart, though she frequently and familiarly associated with her unsuspecting victim, it does not appear that she ever relented from her ferocious purpose;—when that victim, to her knowledge, was expiring in excruciating torments, she showed no symptoms of compassion, much less of remorse;—while she herself lay in prison, month after month, awaiting her trial, she appeared more hardened and careless of her doom as the crisis drew nearer;—when arraigned at the bar of justice, she was stupidly undismayed, and heard the sentence as if it were not her own; nay, her only defence was a most unnatural aggravation of her guilt; she attempted to bring into the same condemnation with herself her nearest relatives, as accomplices in her crime. Between judgment and execution, she betrayed no compunction for past offences, though blood was upon her soul; no sensibility to present danger, though her

very moments were numbered; and no fear of future retribution, though to her there was but the drop of the scaffold between this world and the next. She yielded in one point only, and that at the last gasp,—she cleared her sister, and other friends, whom she had inculpated, and who were suffering dreadfully under the cruel aspersion, from being partakers of her crime or privy to it; and thus the poor infatuated wretch narrowly escaped going into eternity with the guilt of being, by false accusation, the murderer of her next kindred. The hand trembles in transcribing, and the eye revolts from perusing, such a detail of horror, but the value of the lesson to the living makes it a duty not to keep back any part of the known truth. The God of mercy forbid that it should be recorded to cast gratuitous obloquy upon the dead!

But who was she?—The daughter of a peasant, born and brought up in one of those picturesque and retired situations, among mountains and dales, which poetry and ro-

mance would instantly fix upon as the uncontaminated abode of peace, innocence, and virtue. Alas! how little allied to reality, in general, are the dreams of minstrels and the phantasmagoria of tale-tellers! In such places, sequestered not only from the seductions of the great world, but also from the humanizing influences of cultivated society, there frequently prevails a degree of ignorance, —nay, brutishness, —which, however harmless in its ordinary phlegmatic course, yet, under the excitement of envy, revenge, or cupidity, is capable of daring and perpetrating the most desperate deeds. This young woman had learned to read, but she had learned that to little purpose; for, according to a document, which the writer has seen, "she was never placed in the way of moral instruction, nor accustomed to religious observances." For lack of knowledge, then, she perished. Even in her last hour, she preserved that obdurate composure which she had held from the beginning, though she joined in the language of devotion, and

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performed with decency the common-place part assigned to her by ancient usage, in the solemnities of her own death. But she manifested no sign of true penitence to the eye of man; so that, when her spirit returned to Him who gave it; "an involuntary shuddering seized the assembled multitude," says a spectator, "and though she excited little sympathy, a general feeling of horror was expressed, that one so young should have been so guilty and so insensible."—To the credit of the poorer part of her sex, in that quarter of the kingdom, no female had been executed at the county-town where she suffered, (in March, 1819,) during sixty years preceding.

That comparative virtue, however, was not the effect of the severity of the law, on the contrary, the impotence of such severity, was strikingly exemplified in the case under consideration: Hannah's crime having been committed in the immediate vicinity, within the daily view, and almost under the shadow, of a gibbet, on which hung, creaking in his

irons, close by the highway side, the body of a youth, who, a few years before, and almost as prematurely as she, had been executed for the deliberate murder of a poor woman that kept an adjacent toll-gate. This early victim of justice, in barbarity, folly, and insensibility, was the prototype of the unfortunate girl whom the example of his fearful end, and his posthumous ignominy, could not deter from following the more impressive example of his wicked deed.—Such was his fatuity, that, while the eyes of the whole neighbourhood were in search of the murderer, he gave to his "sweetheart" a pair of shoes which he had stolen from the cottage, if not from the person of his victim. Thus, he became his own betrayer. His remains are suspended scarcely a stone's throw from his father's cottage, and in full prospect before it; a spectacle of terror to those only who need not such warnings, and of indifference, it might seem, to those for whom alone these portentous exhibitions could be intended. I have heard of a criminal, thus gibbeted

near a provincial town, whose widow, when she went to market, used to lock the door of her house, and taking her little children with her, turned them loose at the gallows' foot, bidding them play there, under the care of their father, till she returned.

The epilogue of poor Hannah's history, &c. shall be given in the words of a spectator of her execution. "Being at the out-skirts of the town, about one o'clock yesterday, I was shocked to meet numerous parties of *girls* and *young women*, dressed in their best attire, returning from the tragic exhibition which they had been witnessing,—laughing and sauntering carelessly along, as though they were perfectly unconscious, that, a few moments before, they had been present when a soul had been violently separated from its earthly companion under circumstances the most awful. Then must I add the drunken scenes that disgraced the streets at night; and let the dispassionate statesman say, what good has been done by an execution."

The foregoing remarks and illustrations

have been thrown together for the sole purpose of presenting, not to the abhorrence, but to the compassion of the more virtuous classes of the community, the most unfortunate of all human beings, — children and youth, training up, in this Christian country, for the service of sin here, and its wages, death, hereafter; — death, temporal and premature by debauchery, suicide, or the sentence of the law; — and death eternal, if not rescued in time from the perils of error by religious instruction, or plucked in their last moments, by the hand of Divine Mercy, like brands from the burning.

AN OLD ENGLISH YEAR.

THERE is nothing in the history of the ancient Jews, (miracles themselves not excepted), more surprising to Christian readers, than their proneness to murmur under every dispensation of Providence which they did not perfectly understand and approve; and yet nothing ought to be less surprising, since Christians themselves are frequently Jews in this. Those who can look back a little way into the last century, and call up the images and remembrances of years that are long vanished, are ready to tell their juniors, that when they were children, time wore a lovelier aspect and more characteristic features than he does now; the climate was more genial, and the seasons were more regular; spring was all fragrance and promise; summer all glory and beauty; autumn all mirth and festivity; winter was magnificence abroad, and fire-

side felicity at home. But now "winter lingers in the lap of May," summer is cheerless and humid, autumn late and unfruitful; while winter is neither hot nor cold, wet nor dry, and has neither frost nor snow, nor indeed any weather to which a name can be given;—in short, these complainants depose, that *now* there is no gradation of seasons at all; and the months, from one end of the year to the other, are so little distinguishable, that they might very well be reversed from December to January, if not dislocated altogether, and dropt from the moon, like things forgotten, in any derangement that might happen.

It must be acknowledged,—ought it not to be a theme for gratitude rather than discontent?—that occasionally, in our free-born English climate, summer and winter seem to meet on neutral ground, during a truce of antipathies, exchange mantles and walk arm in arm through the fields and the forests,—as Glaucus and Diomede, encountering on the plain before Troy, suspended hostility, entered into cordial communion, and ex-

changed armour, in token of the ancient friendship between their houses; the youthful warrior resigning his golden mail, which cost a hundred oxen, for the veteran's battered brass, too dear at ten. Thus in the months of July and August we have seen the woods flourishing in their fullest luxuriance of foliage, and the orchards glowing with fruit amidst pastures that wore the arid appearance of winter without snow; while in December and January we have observed the same woods and orchards, barren and leafless, surrounded by the same pastures, clothed in the verdure and freshness of May, where sheep were nibbling, and cattle ruminating at their ease, with vernal delight and tranquillity. But, in general, year follows year, in the cycles of time, with so little variation of general phases and temperature, that one cannot be distinguished from another, without an effort of recollection, and the association of local or personal events with the season at which they happened. We count not with more certainty on the re-appearance

of the same stars in the firmament, than the return of the same phenomena on the earth, at regular periods, within the compass of twelve months; for in that small circle, that single link in the chain of ages, occur all the great revolutions of nature which the oldest man can expect to witness in his native country.

Complaints, however, such as have been alluded to above, are in almost every body's mouth who has breathed a little longer in this troublesome world than the youth who came to years of discretion yesterday. How far they are true, it would be wasting time to enquire: there is probably no more cause for repining now at the depravity of our changeable climate, than there was of old for the ingratitude of the Jews, when as their daily bread, they received "angels' food," and the water from the rock followed them through all their wanderings, for forty years in the wilderness. It is natural for adults to think that the seasons of their infancy and youth were more delightful in themselves

than those of their maturity and decay, because then they had in their own frames and spirits, sensibilities for enjoyment which age may have blunted, or frequent repetition of the same objects, though objects of pleasure, may have wearied; and because they have discovered that "there is nothing *new* under the sun," they foolishly imagine that there is nothing *good*, but that all must be "vanity and vexation of spirit." Those who are such mal-contents under the administration of almighty Providence, as to make distrust of his wisdom and beneficence an article of their *creed of unbelief*, deserve to have their imaginations realized to themselves: those who have a better sense of mercies, which are renewed every morning, like the manna of the wilderness, will acknowledge that the Lord is good to all that live, and that he still causeth his sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and his rain to fall on the just and the unjust. Let presumption then be silent, or answer, if it can, the sublime interrogations addressed by Jehovah from the

whirlwind, to Job. "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? Or canst thou guide Arcturus and his sons? Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? Canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?"

At length, (*October 6th*, 1818,) there has been a succession of seasons so distinct from each other, so characteristic of the progress of nature from the desolation of winter to the exuberance of harvest, that we might imagine one of the years of the last century had returned from oblivion, and interpolated the late ungenial series with one of the old sort, to show what times *had* been. It is true, that the last winter was rather too effeminate to exemplify the robust and choleric peculiarities of its forefathers in hardier times, who, like the ancient Scythians, were *all face*, and could face any thing in the shape of weather. The heavens were not perpetually scowling with tempests, nor the atmosphere shining intensely with spangles of frost; the earth was

not always iron, nor the waters marble beneath the foot, benumbed till it could no longer feel the cold, nor burning as if it were in the heart of a fire, when warmth and circulation were restored. We did not often hear people, whose teeth chattered till their tongues stuttered, and whose finger-ends tingled in contradiction to their words, congratulate each other on the fine seasonable weather, when the air was so sharp as to make respiration labour to the healthiest and strongest; while death, on the keen blast, (and like the blast invisible, though every where felt) went from house to house, nipping infancy, strangling age, crushing weakness, and peopling church-yards. On the contrary, because, with a few superb interludes of elementary uproar, the winter solstice was generally mild, the atmosphere open, and it was a pleasure to live and breathe, many wise folks seemed to think such clemency a great calamity; and though compelled by their own senses to confess, that the breeze and the sunshine were very agreeable, they

lamented that both should be so unseasonable; nor could the silence of the passing bell, or the voices of their living friends, for whom assuredly it would have tolled, had one bitter night such as they desired, come over them, convince the murmurers that the fine temperature was not pestilential. I envy not the apathy and perverseness of those who will not enjoy such blessings whenever they are sent;—for me there will be dark days, and cold days, and rainy ones enough, before the end of twelve months. Those, however, who would choose nothing from November till April but vapours, and clouds, and storms, or frost, snow, and ice, may expect soon to be gratified to their heart's content, as the seasons have now returned to their regular course; but they must not expect to be a whit happier for the miseries of the next winter, nor will all the coughs, catarrhs, and consumptions, which they or their dearest friends may enjoy in due course, appease their everlasting disposition to find fault with what they cannot mend, since, as shall presently

be shown, they have been no more content with the late orderly seasons than they were wont to be with the desultory ones of past years.

Well, after such a winter as Providence was pleased to send to the unworthy and the unthankful, we had a spring, — a genuine spring, uninterrupted with relapses of frost, the malign influence of blights, or the cutting rigour of east winds; the grass and the flowers, the bud, the foliage, and the bloom, broke forth over the face of the whole land so suddenly and luxuriantly, that they seemed the effects of intelligence and design in the bosom of the earth that bore them; as if it were by her own choice, and at her own pleasure, she awoke from the dust, put on her beautiful garments, and went forth like a bride to meet the sun, returning from the south and rejoicing in the renewal of his splendour and strength. But it was soon discovered that all this loveliness of promise, this pledge of abundance, was vain and fallacious. The birds, however, knew no better

than to be as happy as usual; they loved and they sang, they built and they bred, till the air and the woods rang with their music, glittered with their plumage, and appeared alive with their motion. Man alone was sullen and suspicious; spring *had* come indeed, as of old, but it had only come *at last*; it had come too late, and it went too soon.

Summer quickly succeeded, and the change was decisive; nobody could mistake June for April. The meadows called for the scythe; they were mown, the grass was tedded, the hay was made, the hay was stacked without rain, and almost without labour and expence. The quality was excellent, — no portion of it had been rotted on the ground, or sanded with floods, or gotten too early and in danger of taking fire, but — there must be some defect in every operation of nature and arrangement of Providence, or our perverse spirits would never be satisfied. There was not enough of it; that is, there was not enough for the jobbers, whatever there might be for the cattle. Summer, meanwhile, advanced

with increasing heat and splendour from day to day; the fountains and the streams failed, vegetation languished in the pastures and on the moors, though the hedges were never more gorgeously arrayed in wild roses and honey-suckles, nor the woods and the scattered trees more laden with foliage, in the memory of man. The herds and the flocks, however, pined on the scanty herbage, and languished under the fervors of a sun exercising tropical power in the heart of the temperate zone. Then the murmurs grew loud, impatient, and prophetic; not only the market price of butter and eggs became exorbitant, but the country was threatened with a famine of bread, for the corn-crops were absolutely burnt up. Such were the prognostications of those who were wily enough to foresee an advantage to themselves from the expected and desired failure of harvest.

Autumn, however, came on jovially, and the fields were ready for the sickle a month earlier than in some former years; the harvest was reaped, and housed, like the hay, by

a *coup de main*, without damage from mildew, sprout, rain, or any other accidents: it was perfect in quality, and, as for quantity, there was enough for every body except the speculators, and for them there was too much. Their spleen and disappointment accordingly were exacerbated in proportion to the deliciousness of their former hopes of a bad harvest. A hue and cry must be made: there was plenty of corn, but then the straw was lighter than it might have been if the grain had not been so heavy; in plain English, there would have been more litter for the horses, if there had been less food for man! The harvest had been well got; but the farmers had scarcely paid any wages to what they were accustomed; of course thousands of industrious poor, especially Irish labourers, had lost what they might have gained, if the season had been unfavourable, though they will gain thrice as much without toil in the comparatively reduced price of the most necessary article of life. — To come down to this present day, the sixth of October: — the

long drought and oppressive heat have been recently followed by abundant and refreshing showers, with lucid intervals of sunshine, which, within the last three weeks, have renovated the aspect of nature, and called forth a second spring in the middle of Autumn, like a beautiful infant playing in the lap of a staid matron, whose other offspring are grown up. What faults can be found now? A hundred,—a thousand,—a million. *e. g.* Apples, after years of scarcity, are so prodigal a crop that they are absolutely a drug;—mushrooms spring up so perseveringly, that the fields in a morning are white over with them, and it is to be feared, that some of his majesty's liege-subjects may be surfeited by eating them to excess, and others poisoned by not eating them at all, but toad-stools in their stead. Onions have been so scarce, that there were golden hopes for a few lucky growers; but now, with the hero in the play, they may "go weep," for such supplies of this dainty vegetable are come from abroad, that the scent need never be lost again by those

who love it. The oaks this year have yielded such enormous quantities of acorns, that the swine fed by this astringent diet may perhaps be cured alive, and turned into leather instead of bacon by the tanning principle! Hops are so plentiful, that some monopolizers are ready to hang themselves on the poles where all their hopes were suspended in clusters, but perished amidst the redundant produce of the plant. Such have been the grievances of the murmurers against Providence in a year after their own mind, consisting of four distinct seasons, — Winter, Spring, Summer, and Autumn, according to the good old fashion; — a year which, no doubt, will be remembered by the very same persons, to contrast in the way of ingenious comparison with less beneficent ones to come, for the worthy purpose of proving to posterity how much times have degenerated.

The "present times" always have been — and probably always will be, — the worst. The groans of all ages, from the golden down to the iron, over the blessedness of those that

went before them, testify this paradoxical truth; but no sooner does the present time become the past, than it is canonized like all its ancestors, and its vanished felicities are sung and celebrated by poets and orators, patriots and moralists. And so will it be with our own day; when it is turned into yesterday, it will rise again on the eyes of to-morrow, as bright and benign as if sunshine and showers had alternately shed glory and fertility on every step of its progress. It is, however, a lamentable thing, that, as the virtues and good deeds of many men never appear till their tomb-stones are engraven with them, the superiority of the period that is passing away, should not be discovered by those who live in it, but only be recorded and deplored by their successors to justify ingratitude against Providence for the peculiar advantages which they possess, because those advantages may be accompanied with some inconveniences brought upon themselves, which their forefathers had escaped by more prudence or less caprice. *This*, however, is

a general source of consolation, that if the "present times" were always the worst, our own time is only like those that went before it, and might, without the aid of sophistry, be proved from this very fact to be as good as any, even the best of them.

To return to the original subject: whatever may have occasioned the real or imaginary change of climate in this country, we all know one thing, — we cannot mend the weather, and yet nothing is easier than to say how it might be mended; for though man is reluctantly compelled to acknowledge himself inferior in power to his Maker, he does not so hopelessly relinquish his claim to superior wisdom. Supposing, then, that a decree went forth from Heaven, and the controul of the elements were placed in the hands of those, whose self-interest would be a security that they would make the best use they could of their awful authority, — what kind of seasons should we have? In the first place, every farmer would command such weather on his own lands, as in his judgment would be most

auspicious for his particular soil, crops, and live-stock. Hence, at the same hour of the day, from an elevated station, we might behold the sky chequered with a thousand little spots of cloud and azure, precisely in the shapes of the fields below, and those fields equally diversified with snow, rain, hail, shade, sunshine, dew, and hoar-frost. In the next place, as it would be unfair for the farmers to monopolize all the weather, every body would exercise the same privilege so far as concerned himself, for his own petty convenience. Thus in walking, riding, sitting after dinner, lying in bed, each would choose to be surrounded by such atmosphere as suited his fancy; and a lady paying her morning visits, might have the trouble of dressing and undressing between each, having first ascertained, by an *avant courier*, carrying a thermometer, the temperature of every family-establishment, — or run the hazard of her life, by passing through all the climates of the five zones, calling at so many houses. On the subject of the wind, especially, there

would be so much contradiction, that were thirty-two ships to meet on the open ocean, each would raise a wind from a separate point of the compass, and the consequence would be, that being blown upon at one instant from all quarters, the opposite winds would either effectually stop each other's breath, and there would be a dead calm, till the most obstinate or best provisioned had starved the others out, or the two-and-thirty ships would be dashed to pieces, bowsprit to bowsprit, at the first onset of the hostile gales.

Leaving the decision of the latter paradox to the correspondents of the Ladies' Diary, we may escape to shore, and observe, that as soon as it was known, that so marvellous a gift had been communicated to man, cunning, rich, and ambitious individuals would set themselves to work, to buy up or extort from their neighbours and dependants their respective shares of the common privilege. Thus landlords would stipulate in their leases what meteorological economy their tenants should use, as they now restrict their plowing

and grazing; — noblemen and others of immense wealth would exercise the same honourable influence among their vassals, on the score of the seasons, which they now exercise respecting the elective franchise; there would be a weather-mart in the metropolis that would rival the stock-exchange, in the fluctuations of its *omnium*, for dispensing wind, rain, and sun in every part of the known world; above all, government, ever watchful to avail itself of all equitable modes of raising the supplies, would lay the elements under contribution, and tax the air we breathe, as it has already taxed the light of heaven. These monopolies and limitations might have one good effect in the end; instead of a million kinds of weather at once throughout the kingdom, we might only have a hundred thousand.

But a consequence, little expected at first, might ensue, which cannot be better described than by saying that there would be no weather at all; for it is probable, that every distinction, by the proximity and interference of its

opposite, would be neutralized, and we should know neither heat nor cold, moist nor dry, fair nor foul. Contemporary varieties, each separate, yet all intermingled, and crowded one upon another, would produce the effect of universal mist and confusion. All that delights the eye of the painter in the forms and colours of external nature; all that swells the bosom of the poet with rapture, in contemplating the heavens and the earth; all the glory, simplicity, and grandeur of God's visible works, would be annihilated. One livid gloom would pervade the atmosphere, and one lukewarm feverish feeling possess the frames of men and animals; the herbage would languish beneath their feet, and the harvests rot ere they ripened for the sickle. Famine would begin, and pestilence consummate the destruction of all life. "Chaos would come again." The earth would soon be without form and void, and darkness would be upon the face of the earth; — or, if there were light, it would shine as on the first days of the creation, without an eye to look upon it.

It is enough to reconcile any reflecting person to the most mysterious and afflictive dispensations of Providence, to consider how much more calamitous would be our situation, were we allowed to be the choosers of our own lot, under any imaginable circumstances.

THE MOON AND STARS,

A FABLE.

On the fourth day of Creation, when the sun, after a glorious but solitary course, went down in the evening, and darkness began to gather over the face of the uninhabited globe already arrayed in exuberance of vegetation, and prepared by the diversity of land and water for the abode of uncreated animals and man,—a star, single and beautiful, stept forth into the firmament. Trembling with wonder and delight in new-found existence, she looked abroad, and beheld nothing in heaven or on earth resembling herself. But she was not long alone, now one, then another, here a third, and there a fourth, resplendent companion had joined her, till, light after light stealing through the gloom, in the lapse of an hour, the whole hemisphere was brilliantly bespangled.

The planets and stars, with a superb comet

flaming in the zenith, for a while contemplated themselves and each other; and every one from the largest to the least was so perfectly well pleased with himself, that he imagined the rest only partakers of his felicity,—he being the central luminary of his own universe, and all the host of heaven beside displayed around him in graduated splendour. Nor were any undeceived with regard to themselves, though all saw their associates in their real situations and relative proportions, self-knowledge being the last knowledge acquired either in the sky or below it,—till, bending over the ocean in their turns, they discovered what they imagined, at first, to be a new heaven, peopled with beings of their own species; but when they perceived further that no sooner had any one of their company touched the horizon than he instantly disappeared, they then recognized themselves in their individual forms, reflected beneath according to their places and configurations above, from seeing others whom they previously knew, reflected in like man-

ner. By an attentive but mournful self-examination in that mirror, they slowly learned humility, but every one learned it only for himself, none believing what others insinuated respecting their own inferiority, till they reached the western slope from whence they could identify their true images in the nether element. Nor was this very surprizing, —stars being only visible points, without any distinction of limbs, each was all eye, and though he could see others most correctly, he could neither see himself, nor any part of himself—till he came to reflection! The comet, however, having a long train of brightness streaming sunward, *could* review that, and did review it with ineffable self-complacency: — indeed, after all pretensions to precedence, he was at length acknowledged king of the hemisphere, if not by the universal assent, by the silent envy of all his rivals.

But the object which attracted most attention and astonishment, too, was a slender thread of light, that scarcely could be discerned through the blush of evening, and vanished

soon after night-fall, as if ashamed to appear in so scanty a form, like an unfinished work of creation. It was the moon, — the first new moon; — timidly she looked round upon the glittering multitude, that crowded through the dark serenity of space, and filled it with life and beauty. Minute indeed they seemed to her, but perfect in symmetry, and formed to shine for ever; while, she was unshapen, incomplete, and evanescent. In her humility, she was glad to hide herself from their keen glances in the friendly bosom of the ocean, wishing for immediate extinction. When she was gone the stars looked one at another with inquisitive surprize, as much as to say, "What a figure!" It was so evident, that they all thought alike, and thought contemptuously of the apparition, (though at first they almost doubted whether they should not be frightened,) that they soon began to talk freely concerning her, — of course, not with audible accents, but in the language of intelligent sparkles, in which stars are accustomed to converse with telegraphic precision from one

end of Heaven to the other,—and which no dialect on earth so nearly resembles as the language of eyes,—the only one, probably, that has survived in its purity, not only the confusion of Babel, but the revolutions of all ages. Her crooked form, which they deemed a violation of the order of nature, and her shyness, equally unlike the frank intercourse of stars, were ridiculed and censured from pole to pole; for what good purpose such a monster could have been created, not the wisest could conjecture; yet, to tell the truth, every one, though glad to be countenanced in the affectation of scorn by the rest, had secret misgivings concerning the stranger, and envied the delicate brilliancy of her light, while she seemed but the fragment of a sunbeam,—they, indeed, knew nothing about the sun,—detached from a long line, and exquisitely bended.

All the gay company, however, quickly returned to the admiration of themselves and the inspection of each other. What became of them, when they descended into the ocean,

they could not determine; some imagined that they ceased to be; others that they transmigrated into new forms, while a third party thought it probable, as the earth was evidently convex, that their departed friends travelled through an under-arching sky, and might hereafter re-ascend from the opposite quarter. In this hypothesis they were confirmed by the testimony of the stars that came from the east, who unanimously asserted, that they had been pre-existent for several hours in a remote region of sky, over continents and seas now invisible to them; and, moreover, that when they rose here they had actually seemed to set there. Thus the first night passed away. But when the east began to dawn, consternation seized the whole army of celestials, each feeling himself fainting into invisibility, and as he feared into nothingness, while his neighbours were, one after another, totally disappearing. At length the sun arose, and filled the heavens, and clothed the earth with his glory. How *he* spent that day belongs not to this history;

but it is elsewhere recorded, that, for the first time from eternity, the lark on the wings of the morning sprang up to salute him, the eagle at noon looked undazzled on his splendour, and when he went down beyond the deep, Leviathan was sporting amidst the multitude of waves.

Then again, in the evening, the vanished constellations awoke gradually, and on opening their eyes were so rejoiced at meeting together, — not one being wanting of last night's levee, — that they were in the highest good humour with themselves and one another. Tricked in all their beams, and darting their benignest influence, they exchanged smiles and endearments, and made vows of affection eternal and unchangeable; while from this nether orb, the song of the nightingale rose out of darkness, and charmed even the stars in their courses, being the first sound, except the roar of ocean, that they had ever heard. "The music of the spheres" may be traced to the rapture of that hour.

The little gleaming horn was again discerned, leaning backward over the western hills. This companionless luminary, they thought, — but they must be mistaken, — it could not be, — and yet they were afraid that it was so, — appeared somewhat stronger than on the former occasion. The moon herself, still only blinking at the scene of magnificence, early escaped beneath the horizon, leaving the comet in proud possession of the sky. — About midnight, the whole congregation, shining in quiet and amicable splendour, as they glided with unfelt and invisible motion through the pure blue fields of æther, were suddenly startled by a phantom of fire, on the approach of which the comet himself turned pale, the planets dwindled into dim specks, and the greater part of the stars swooned utterly away. Shooting upwards, like an arrow of flame, from the east, — in the zenith it was condensed to a globe, with scintillating spires diverging on every side; it paused not a moment there, but rushing with accelerated velocity towards

the west, burst into a thousand coruscations, that swept themselves into annihilation before it could be said that they *were*. The blaze of this meteor was so refulgent, that passing blindness struck the constellations, and after they were conscious of its disappearance, it took many twinklings of their eyes before they could see distinctly again. Then with one accord they exclaimed, " how beautiful ! how transient !"— After gravely moralizing for a good while on its enviable glory but unenviable doom, they were all reconciled to their own milder but more permanent lustre. One pleasant effect was produced by the visit of the stranger, — the comet thenceforward appeared less illustrious in their eyes by comparison with this more gorgeous phenomenon, which, though it came in an instant, and went as it came, never to return, ceased not to shine in their remembrance night after night.

On the third evening, the moon was so obviously increased in size and splendour, and stood so much higher in the firmament

than at first, though she still hastened out of sight, that she was the sole subject of conversation on both sides of the galaxy, till the breeze, that awakened newly-created man from his first slumber in Paradise, warned the stars to retire, and the sun, with a pomp never witnessed in our degenerate days, ushered in the great sabbath of creation, when "the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them."

The following night the moon took her station still higher, and looked brighter than before, insomuch that it was remarked of the lesser stars in her vicinity, that many of them were paler, and some no longer visible. As their associates knew not how to account for this, they naturally enough presumed that her light was fed by the accession and absorption of theirs; and the alarm became general, that she would thus continue to thrive by consuming her neighbours, till she had incorporated them all with herself.

Still, however, she preserved her humility and shamefacedness, till her crescent had ex-

ceeded the first quarter. Hitherto she had only grown lovelier, but now she grew prouder at every step of her preferment. Her rays too became so intolerably dazzling, that fewer and fewer of the stars could endure their presence, but shrouded themselves in her light as behind a veil of darkness. When she verged to maturity, the heavens seemed too small for her ambition. She "rose in clouded majesty," but the clouds melted at her approach, or spread their garments in her path, of many a rich and rainbow tint.

She had crossed the comet in her course, and left him as wan as a vapour behind her. On the night of her fulness she triumphed gloriously in mid-heaven, smiled on the earth, and arrayed it in a softer day, for she had repeatedly seen the sun, and though she could not rival him when he was above the horizon, she fondly hoped to make his absence forgotten. Over the ocean she hung, enamoured of her own beauty reflected in the abyss. The few stars that still could stand amidst her overpowering effulgence converged their rays

and shrunk into bluer depths of æther, to gaze at a safe distance upon her. "What more can she be?" — thought these scattered survivors of myriads of extinguished sparklers, for the "numbers without number" that thronged the milky way had altogether disappeared. Again, thought these remnants of the host of Heaven,—"as hitherto she has increased every evening, to-morrow she will do the same, and we must be lost like our brethren in her all-conquering resplendence."

The moon herself was not a little puzzled to imagine what might become of her; but vanity readily suggested, that although she had reached her full form, she had not reached her full size, consequently, by a regular nightly expansion of her circumference, she would finally cover the whole convexity of sky, not only to the exclusion of the stars, but the sun himself, since he occupied a superior region of space, and certainly could not shine through her: —till man, and his beautiful companion woman, looking upward from the bowers of Eden, would see *all moon* above them, and

walk in the light of her countenance for ever. In the midst of this self-pleasing illusion, a film crept upon her, which spread from her utmost verge athwart her centre, till it had completely eclipsed her visage, and made her a blot on the tablet of the heavens. In the progress of this disaster, the stars which were hid in her pomp stole forth to witness her humiliation; but their transport and her shame lasted not long,—the shadow retired as gradually as it had advanced, leaving her fairer by contrast than before. Soon afterwards the day broke, and she withdrew, marvelling what would next befall her.

Never had the stars been more impatient to resume their places, nor the moon more impatient to rise than on the following evening. With trembling hope and fear, the planets that came out first after sunset espied her disk, broad and dark red, emerging from a gulph of clouds in the east. At the first glance, their keen celestial sight discovered that her western limb was a little contracted, and her orb no longer perfect. She herself was too

much elated to suspect any failing, and fondly imagined by that species of self-measurement whereby earthly as well as heavenly bodies are apt to deem themselves greater than they are, that she must have continued to increase all round, — till she had got above the Atlantic; but even then she was only chagrined to perceive that her image was no larger than it had been last night. There was not a star in the horoscope,—no, not the comet himself,— durst tell her she was less.

Another night went, and another night came. She rose as usual, a little later. Even while she travelled above the land she was haunted with the idea, that her lustre was rather feebler than it had been; but when she beheld her face in the sea, she could no longer overlook the unwelcome defect. The season was boisterous;— the wind rose suddenly, and the waves burst into foam; perhaps the tide, for the first time, then was affected by sympathy with the moon; and what had never happened before, an universal tempest mingled heaven and earth in rain, and light-

ning, and darkness. She plunged among the thickest of the thunder-clouds, and in the confusion that hid her disgrace, her exulting rivals were all likewise put out of countenance.

On the next evening, and every evening afterwards, the moon came forth later, and less, and dimmer, while, on each occasion, more and more of the minor stars, which had formerly vanished from her eye, re-appeared to witness her fading honours and disfigured form. Prosperity had made her vain; adversity brought her to her right mind again, and humility soon compensated the loss of glaring distinction with softer charms, that won the regard which haughtiness had repelled; for when she had worn off her uncouth gibbous aspect, and through the last quarter, her profile waned into a hollow shell, she appeared more graceful than ever in the eyes of all heaven. When she was originally seen among them, the stars contemned her; afterwards, as she grew in beauty, they envied, feared, hated, and finally fled from her. As she relapsed into insignificance, they first rejoiced in her decay, then

endured her superiority because it could not last long; but when they marked how she wasted away every time they met, compassion succeeded,—and on the three last nights, (like a human fair one in the latest stage of decline, growing lovelier and dearer to her friends till the close,) she disarmed hostility, conciliated kindness, and secured affection;—she was admired, beloved, and unenvied by all.

At length there came a night when there was no moon.—There was silence in heaven all that night. In serene meditation on the changes of a month, the stars pursued their journey from sunset to daybreak. The comet had likewise departed into unknown regions. His fading lustre had been attributed at first to the bolder radiance of the moon in her meridian, but during her wane, while inferior luminaries were brightening around her, he was growing fainter and smaller every evening, and now he was no more. Of the rest, planets and stars, all were unimpaired in their light, and the former only slightly varied in their positions. The whole multitude, wiser

by experience, and better for their knowledge, were humble, contented and grateful, each for his lot, whether splendid or obscure.

Next evening, to the joy and astonishment of all, the moon with a new crescent was descried in the west; and instantly, from every quarter of the pole, she was congratulated on her happy resurrection. Just as she went down, while her bow was yet recumbent on the dark-purple horizon, it is said, that an angel appeared, standing between her horns. Turning his head, his eye glanced rapidly over the universe,—the sun far sunk behind him, the moon under his feet, the earth spread in prospect before him, and the firmament all glittering with constellations above. He paused a moment, and then, in that tongue wherein at the accomplishment of creation "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy," he thus brake forth:—"Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty! In wisdom hast Thou made them all.—Who would

not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name, for Thou only art holy?"—He ceased,—and from that hour there has been harmony in heaven.

COMMON-PLACE.

COMMON-PLACE is become an epithet of contempt, equally indiscriminating and unjust, being applied without mercy to whatever is frequent and familiar in life, manners, and books. Like another indefinite term of reproach,—*an old song*,—this anomalous compound is often employed to disparage what is most valuable, as well as to brand what is most vile. A song scarcely can grow old, or be in every body's mouth, without implying extraordinary intrinsic merit, or intimate association with some high interest which hallows it in remembrance. Whatever is greatest and best in nature and in morals is likewise so antiquated and universal, that, in the way of the world, it is overlooked as mere "common-place," and no more esteemed than "an old song," by those whose chief happiness, perhaps, springs from the

possession, or their misery from the abuse of it.

Common things, however, *are* best;—the things that are common to all mankind. The extraordinary gifts of Providence are rarely desirable, except when they are superadded to the ordinary ones; for, splendid as they may be, they are utterly inadequate as compensations for the loss of the others. A wise man, therefore, of the two would prefer the latter, where he could have only one, and the choice of that one depended on himself; though with either, as a Christian, he could learn to be content. Those blessings which are the birthright and inheritance of every rational creature, in possession of his faculties of mind and body, and suffering no absolute privation of the necessaries of life,—those every-day blessings are incomparably greater, in number and in measure, than all beside, whatever it may be, that is most coveted, and sought, and retained, by the privileged minority, whom personal, pecuniary, or intellectual advantages exalt above their fellows

of the multitude. By far the largest portion of happiness which falls to any individual, from the highest to the lowest, arises from sources of enjoyment accessible to all that live, and move, and have their being, among the family of man. Those common things that are the best may be generally summed up in a few words,—so simple, that they are among the first which a child learns to understand, yet so comprehensive, as to supply more materials for thought than any other equal number that could be selected from the whole vocabulary of language;—air, light, food, health, and a sound mind.

Air,—and what is so common as air?—Air is the breath of life; without it we die; it can neither be refined nor deteriorated, but the alteration will produce injury. Air is the blessing, of all others, the most impartially distributed, and the most universally enjoyed; for with regard to this prime aliment of existence, so far as it is in its wholesome state, none can complain that God hath dealt unequally with them. Can wealth, or power,

or knowledge, improve the air, so as to give possessors of these the freedom of a purer and more exhilarating element? Yes, — but they must pay the price of their voluptuousness: — they may breathe oxygen gas or nitrous oxid, if they will, every hour of the day, on condition that their days shall be cut down to hours, and life itself consume like deflagrated metals by intensity of combustion.

"*Light* is precious, and it is a pleasant thing to see the sun." The power of sight, revealing the works of God and man, and enabling us most effectually to perform the purposes for which we were born, is a benefit which none in his senses would transfer, if he might, for any mercenary advantage. He who should pluck out his own eyes, and give them in exchange for the diamonds of Golconda, would, figuratively at least, be so enlightened as to see his own folly, though he could see nothing else in the darkness that surrounded him, from the moment when the bargain was irreversibly sealed. In the exercise of vision, what do the noble, the rich,

or the wise, enjoy above the humblest, the weakest, the most ignorant? Nothing to be named in comparison with what is open to all; for what are the internal decorations of palaces, the smiles of court-favourites, and the magnificence of midnight revels, when brought into competition with the eternal spectacle of heaven and earth, of men and animals at large, in their beautiful and infinite variety of colours, and forms, and characters? Were the dire necessity of an election between two evils laid upon any body, — to relinquish for ever acquaintance with the one or the other of these two classes of external objects, — who would consent thenceforth to behold nothing but artificial beings and images, by everlasting candle-light, and renounce the inexhaustible glories of creation, — the sun, the sea, the mountains, and the woods, "with all that them inherit?"

"I would not for a world of gold,
That Nature's lovely face should tire,"

(BLOOMFIELD.)

exclaims one of her true children, and therefore a true poet in feeling, how humble soever be his claims to the "fine frenzy" of genius.

In *food* the difference of condition between the needy and the affluent is more palpable than in either of the foregoing cases; but if the deliciousness of viands depends upon the relish with which they are eaten, the vigour with which they are digested in the stomach, and the strength and nourishment derived from their use, it may appear that the necessaries of life are in reality the greatest luxuries, and that the labourer, in the course of three score years and ten of hale temperance, has had, at least, as much of this pleasure of sense, as the glutton or the wine-bibber, whom

—— "apoplexy knocks
"Down to the ground at once, as butcher felleth ox,"—

or whom gout has lingeringly broken on the wheel, joint by joint, even to extreme old age

continually threatening, but still withholding, the *coup de grace.* He who has so much of the staff of life as will support him on his feet, need not repine because it is solid, and not hollow, concealing within it a rapier, which he might be tempted to employ, not in defence only, but for suicide.

Health is so essential to the enjoyment of every other blessing, that it is less one of their number than the climate, (if the metaphor may be allowed,) in which all the rest are indigenous, and transplanted from which none of them can grow to perfection; all substitutes for health being but as hot-houses in which exotic vegetables are trained up in sickly and ungenial seclusion, but where they can never pour forth the multitude of foliage, prodigality of bloom, and abundance of fruit, which they do, without forcing, in their own soil. Health is far from being disproportionately dealt among the offspring of Adam, "in whom all die;" and the poor, least of any, have cause to repine at their share. Who would change the legs on which he can

take exercise, or stand to labour, from morning till night, for a coach and six, with everlasting *podagra*; or forego his plain fare and sound slumbers, to be fed for days, and months, and years, with the delicacies of a wealthy invalid's chamber, and to be watched, with perpetual anxiety, by the eye of unsleeping affection, in the form of a faithful wife, or a dutiful daughter, wasting herself to a shadow for his accommodation? When the limbs fail, and life is only prolonged affliction, happy are they who can command the superfluities of opulence to supply the deficiencies of nature in those things whereof she is generally most bountiful; but till then, it is well for mankind, that they *are* superfluities; — a miserable world would it be, if wine were as necessary for domestic comfort as water, and gold as indispensable for edged tools as iron.

With respect to the highest distinctions of man, though intellectual superiority is a far more honourable object of ambition than any pre-eminence besides, arising out of the inequality of human conditions, yet for the majo-

rity, the unregarded blessing of a *sound mind* is preferable to faculties, the most rare, or acquirements the most imposing, because a sound mind is necessary for happiness, but these are not — nay, too often they are found incompatible with happiness. The price at which solitary beings, of the most brilliant endowments, render themselves the delight and admiration of mankind, is beyond the power of any to estimate except those who pay it. Genius, like incense, gives not forth its sweetness but in self-consuming flames. The dolphin, in his pastime, glitters with a thousand burnished dyes, while he gambols among the billows; but it is on deck, when drawn out of his element, and in the agonies of death, that he throws out all his glories, and the shudder of every pang darts a new colour along his side. The nightingale in the woods is said to lean upon a thorn, while she pours out her soul in raptures of melody; and in confinement, there are tyrants so exquisite of ear, that they put out her eyes to extort more ravishingly plaintive expression from her song. — Hap-

pily, however, common sense alone is requisite for the commerce of life, and, united with virtue and sensibility, is sufficient for an introduction to all the pleasures of taste, as well as the full participation of all the social and fire-side felicities of home. It would be no improvement of our various intercourse, in business, conversation, or public duty, if all speech were poetry, and all sounds music. Who would chuse to hear a gang of jew-brokers, on 'Change, stock-jobbing in blank-verse, fish-wives, at Billingsgate, scolding in dactyls and spondees, or a dandy dunned by a man-milliner for the price of a pair of stays, in lyric measures, though their numbers were as dulcet as those of the dialogue between Horace and Lydia? Much less would existence be tolerable, were the universe converted into an orchestra, and the voices of men and brutes all harmonized according to the principles of thorough bass, till crotchets and quavers should so ring in our ears, that we could never have any thing else in our heads.

Hence it appears, that, however ungrateful we may be for them, common-blessings are the best; and it is one proof of the goodness of the Creator, that he has made the best blessings common; while, from the perversity of the creature, it often happens that the extraordinary gifts which he confers (for extraordinary purposes, no doubt,) on the few who are eminently great, and rich, and intelligent, are burthened with such qualifications as to reduce the standard of actual enjoyment in their possessors to the ordinary level, on an average, and in some of the most signal instances below it.

One moral, or rather one religious illustration, may with propriety close this subject. It is a striking fact, that those very things, which the wise of this world, and the righteous in their own esteem, contemn as common-place, are the highest truths of God which it concerns men to know, believe, and practise;—and they are truths of which none, in this Christian country at least, need be ignorant, but such as wilfully close their eyes, and stop

their ears, against the light of nature and the voice of revelation. All knowledge, human and divine, is easy of attainment in precise proportion as it is essential to happiness; and there is not, throughout all His works of creation and ways of providence, a more glorious exemplification of the wisdom (no less than the goodness, to which allusion has been already made,) of the Almighty, than this circumstance, much as it has been overlooked by those, who in the pride of their hearts affect to despise what is plain, and exalt as most excellent what is most difficult. *This* is looking at near-hand objects from the wrong end of the telescope, that diminishes their forms, and casts them into distance; while, by an act of grave folly no less preposterous, it is attempting to explore with a microscope others which are placed as far from minute observation as the heavenly bodies are from the orbit of the earth. With the naked eye, if that eye be single, the humblest human being may discern "the narrow way that leadeth unto life;" — but it

required the soul and the sagacity of a Newton to unravel the many-coloured woof of the rainbow, and discover the cause why the leaf detached from the tree falls to the ground;—so infinitely more simple are "the things that belong to our peace," than those secrets, however sublime and interesting in themselves, which only add to our information without purifying our hearts. The "charity," which "suffereth long and is kind," which "envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up," — the "charity," which "seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil," which "believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things," — the charity, which "never faileth," *is* necessary both for life and godliness, and is placed within the reach of all to whom the Gospel has been sent; whereas "the prophecies," which "shall fail," "the tongues," which "shall cease," and the "knowledge," which "shall vanish away," are given to few, and are unattainable by the multitude; nor is it any disparagement of these to affirm, that, excellent, ennobling,

and benign as they are in their influence upon individuals and their effects in society, they are no more essential to man's eternal felicity than wealth, honour, learning, genius are to his personal and present well-being.

THE EGOTIST,

No. I.

A SIX MILES' TOUR.

Chapter I.

In the autumn of 1814, happening to be detained on a journey to the north, in a large manufacturing town, I walked one Saturday to a village about six miles distant, to visit my old nurse. The weather had been fickle, and I hesitated a long time, whether I should take or leave my umbrella, for the sky looked just as if it would rain if I left it, and be fair if I took it; consequently, whatever I did must be wrong. At length, I determined not to encumber myself with it, and I was right; the weather was better than it promised, which is more than I have ever been; — it was

smiling and serene all the way; so was I, part of it.

I had scarcely settled this point, when I was perplexed with another. There were two roads to my nurse's village, and these lay wide asunder, meeting at the end like the bandy legs of a pair of nut-crackers. After due deliberation, I resolved to take that which went to the right hand; but happening to turn my face to the left, just as I stept out of the inn-yard, I travelled in that direction, looking carefully for the dividing point; when not being well acquainted with the latitude and longitude of the several streets through which it was necessary to pass, I had got to the outside of the town before I discovered, that I had been walking with my back on the road which I had chosen, and was fairly on the way of that which I intended to avoid. This was all very natural, though not very pleasant: it was too late, however, to be angry, and what was better, I had made up my mind not to be so that day; accordingly, though I felt my ears burn a little with chagrin, —

as I looked like a fool in nobody's eyes except my own, (a hard case, yet a very tolerable one,) I bustled on apparently as little concerned as any one I met, and as straight forward as if I had never taken a wrong step in my life.

The sun was shining in his strength; the clouds, broken and scattered, were chasing each other in the blue firmament, brightening or darkening as they approached or receded from his disk, — and even when they crossed it, instead of eclipsing, transmitting his beams through their illuminated fleeces. Soothed with the sweetness, and charmed with the beauty of the scene above, I scarcely deigned for a while to look on the earth, or its petty inhabitants, though they frequently jostled me on either side. Giving my thoughts a holiday, they roved and changed, like the clouds, through every hue of light and shade, becoming gay or pensive as they caught the colours, or reflected the images of surrounding objects.

From this dream of abstraction, I was

roused by passing near an immense manufactory, which was so high and so extended, that its shadow, even at noon-day, threw a gloom over the road and over my spirits. The clock from the belfry above struck twelve; the steam-engine ceased to heave and to roar, and the tall chimney to vomit forth volumes of suffocating smoke: all the complicated motions of the machinery within were suspended; thousands of wheels were instantly at rest, and hundreds of children, in two divisions, issued from the portals over a foot-bridge that crossed the watercourse. The girls came out first, and I was presently walking in the midst of them. These poor females, — for I did not mingle with the boys, — exhibited every variety of complexion and feature that I could imagine in English countenances, at their years, (apparently from ten to fifteen,) according to their respective age or length of service; some were rosy, and some were sallow; many were meagre, a few beautiful; all of them meanly apparelled. Though there was a gleam of animation on every face,

in the prospect of release from toil and confinement, and their voices, as they poured upon the high road, rose louder and shriller, and quicker, expressing only sounds of joy, — the glory of the sun seemed too dazzling for their weak eyes, and the freshness of the breeze too sharp for easy respiration, on coming out of their dismal and smothering prison-rooms. I remarked, that every one had her hair neatly twirled up in papers, preparatory to being displayed in ringlets on the approaching Sabbath, — as I guessed. "Poor creatures!" said I within myself, "whom have you got to please? Who cares whether you are handsome or homely? Is there any body that loves *you*? — No, no; it cannot be; or surely, in the spring-time of life, when your limbs should know no weariness except from exercise or play, and your minds alone should be learning to work, you would not have been sold, for weekly wages, into bodily slavery and mental degradation, by mercenary parents! — *Such* parents should be childless, who, inverting the order of na-

ture, live in idleness or extravagance by the labour of their offspring, whom they ought to be nourishing and training up in virtue by their own honest exertions." I turned away with horror, indulging a sigh for the poor children, and suppressing a groan, which, if it had been uttered, might have been a curse on their parents. I am glad it was not, for it would most probably have been one of the *Kehama* breed, and come home to my own bosom, for this rash and inhuman condemnation of absent and perhaps innocent parties. *

I was still in the straggling suburbs of the town, where a numerous and dirty population dwelt in buildings of all sizes, shapes, and ages, on the left side of the road. On the right, the road itself ran by a stream that did *not* run, but seemed a branch of the Styx, which had strayed into day-light, so sluggish were its waters, and so discoloured with the feculent superfluities of dye-houses and dung-

* Curses are like young chicken, they always come home to roost." *Motto to the Curse of Kehama.*

hills. While I was picking my steps along this delectable path, sounds, worthy of such a neighbourhood, attracted my attention; I turned my head, and behold a man, who wanted washing himself, was resolutely washing a great hog; while the stubborn animal, not knowing whether to be pleased or angry, alternately grunted and screamed, at the soothing or irritating application of the brush (made, for aught I know, with the bristles of one of his ancestors) to his inveterate hide. I stood and laughed almost outright, at what appeared to me such a work of supererogation; for I fancied that the rogue under discipline cast many a swinish look towards a miry pool hard by, with a full determination to run and wallow deliciously in it, as soon as he got out of his master's clutches. That master, however, was not the fool that I, in my folly, took him to be; he was not bestowing his ludicrous pains on an ungrateful subject for the hog's sake, but for his own, that it might not grow ricketty for want of an occasional scouring off of the old slough,

but thrive apace, and make wholesome bacon. Then it flashed upon my mind, — "this thrifty man may be father to one of the poor girls whom I have just left behind me; I wish he loved his child as well as he loves his pig; if only a little of his care and kindness were spent upon her, he could not permit his pretty Mary to be stunted in her growth, ruined in her health, and depraved in her morals, by working all day in a pest-house, amidst filth, and foul air, and wicked companions."

The thought was uncharitable, and I drove it from me as I would the temptation to tell a lie, or pick a pocket, with a feeling of shame that coloured my cheek, raised my pulse, and made me quicken my pace, as if I feared detection. As soon as I durst lift up my eyes, I was relieved and exhilarated in a moment, by the sign of a low ale-house, — "ADMIRAL NELSON." It was a half length portrait, in a gaudy naval uniform; having a scaramouch phiz, under a huge cocked hat, with a glory of gold-lace about it, while above and below were emblazoned in large letters,

the words of his memorable last signal, — "*England expects every man to do his duty.*" I was staggered at first by this redoubtable challenge; but soon rallied and replied, (as loudly as the sign-post itself spoke,) in the equally appropriate words of Cowper: —

"Drink and be mad then! 'tis your country bids;
Gloriously drunk, obey the important call;
Her cause demands the assistance of your throats,
Ye all can swallow, — and she asks no more."

"And thus," thought I to myself, — "thus it is, that England expects every man to do his duty, at the ale-house; yet I would rather be the hog, which the fellow was washing against its will, though I were sure to be killed at Christmas, than live and die in the patriotic performance of this duty, as thousands, alas! do; — thousands of *that* "swinish multitude," who were not brutes by birth, but have made themselves such by their own industry."

Half laughing and half shuddering at these terribly whimsical coincidences, I sauntered along, and having now left the vicinity of the town, I gazed at random on hills and dales, hedges and trees, houses and fields, by the road-side or in the distance, till my eye was caught, and gradually fixed on the motions of a child, — a boy, no doubt, by the boldness of his front, and the breadth of his chest. On a little green bank, at the gable end of a low thatched cottage, he toddled a few steps, stood still, cowered down, and tumbled about, till he had fairly planted himself in an upright posture. Pausing a few moments, as if meditating what to do, he suddenly pulled off his leather hat with both his hands, and then with one of them flung it from him as far as he could send it, — about as far as a grasshopper might jump, — on the ground. There was an earnestness in his full bright eye, a resolution in the pout of his little red under lip, and a vigour in the spring of his Lilliputian arm, which so electrified me, that though his mother, if she

had seen him, might have whipt him for the mischievous trick, I could not help exclaiming, "Well done, my lad! who knows what feats that arm may perform, when time has stretched it to its full length? but,—whether destined to dart the shuttle, to whirl the flail, or wield the sword, I would loth receive a box on the ear from it twenty years hence."

As I was about to proceed, on the contrary side of the way, I perceived the foal of an ass, without the dam, in the middle of a large fold before a farm-house, with horizontal neck, perpendicular ears, and head rectangularly declining; stock still it stood, as if it had nothing to do *but* to stand and to grow, like a cabbage or a sycamore, on one spot. The contrast between the young of the human species and of the basest of quadrupeds was so obvious, that my philosophy, which is not very quick-sighted, could not overlook it, and thus I began to ruminate.—"A child, except when it is asleep, is all activity and observation, and therefore learning continually either good or evil; while the sucking ass is

content to be what it is, and to become whatever hard fare or hard blows shall make it, in the course of a stupid and miserable existence. -- Yes, the ass is born for degradation, and he deserves it, because he submits to it." This castle of sentiment had scarcely been reared in my mind, when the young ass suddenly threw up its heels, kicked it down, and trotted off towards its dam, just then entering the farm yard from the field. Mother and daughter met with transports of joy, the latter gambolling like a kitten, and both speaking that dialect which Nature has taught to asses and to no other animals. Dissonant, however, and hideous as their voices were, the strong emphasis of maternal solicitude on the one part, and the more imperfect expression of filial piety on the other, translated every syllable into the purest English to my ear, and I should have been without natural affection myself, if I could not have understood the language of theirs.

While I was standing, a delighted spectator of this scene, I was roused by the

rattling of a carriage, coming jog-trot down the road, and ready to run over me before I was aware. Starting aside, I saw a chimney-sweeper and his apprentice accompanying a cart filled with soot-bags, drawn by a horse and an ass, — the ass being the leader, and wearing a grand top-knot and tassel between his long ears, while the poor horse groaned in the shafts. "The ass is not always degraded," thought I, returning to my former train of musing; "but this is the way of the world, — good fortune before good manners; dulness takes precedence of merit; yet after all, it is better to follow an ass than to be one."

I walked forward now at a brisk pace, having already lost much time by rumination; — I ought rather to say, that I had gained it, for, had I not thus ruminated, the time spent on this excursion would have disappeared in that blank of oblivion, in which the greater part of our moments, minutes, hours, and days, are undistinguishably lost; a thought remembered at the distance of three months is a thought

in a million, and ought to be worth recording; whether mine are such must be decided by better judges than I am, but of whom, no doubt, each of my readers will be one.

I said I was proceeding at a brisk pace,—but I was soon tempted to loiter again, by meeting a group of noisy children, boys and girls, talking and laughing in their glee, as if there had been no yesterday, and would be no to-morrow. The youngest of the party was carrying a rattle,—not a child's rattle, I assure you, but one that was quite a load to its little arms, yet it hugged the precious burthen to its breast, and strutted as proudly as if it were bearing the gilded mace before my Lord Mayor. No doubt, the urchin knew the powers of the instrument, and had listened with rapture to those terrific sounds, which scare the little birds from the corn-fields; and now, I dare say, he felt himself a giant, in comparison with the pigmies against whom the artillery that he bore would speedily be employed, though it required an arm more muscular than his to put it in motion, and

roll out its thunders. The love of power, I am persuaded, is the earliest, the strongest, and the most abiding passion of the human breast; the infant begins to struggle for it in his cradle; he is a tyrant in the lap; the first exercises of his strength are in beating the breast that nourishes him, with his puny fists; and the first slaves of his usurped authority are his parents. It was the love of power, and the consciousness of holding it in his hands, though he could not wield it, that made the tiny hero before me submit to the toil of carrying the engine of alarm already named, and made him, in his own eyes, not only superior to a host of hedge-sparrows, but greater than all his companions.

When this warlike corps were gone by, I ventured to peep over the next fence, to see whether I could not descry some marauding party of the enemy against whom so formidable a battle-array had been marshalled. Observing a corn-field, I clapped my hands and whooped, when up sprang a flock of small game, which were pillaging the harvest.

They whirred with their wings, chirped in their flight, and all settled in a neighbouring hedge. "You petty larceners," said I, gravely addressing them, "justice is on the road, and though its arm may not reach you, its terrors will break your peace, while you are breaking the king's, by quietly robbing his liege subjects. If you destroyed no more grain than you put into your little crops, you might be welcome to that; it is your share; but you deserve all the frights that you suffer from apparitions of scare-crows and the creaking of rattles, because you scatter and waste more than you eat." The birds probably heard my remonstrance, for every now and then they turned their pretty heads on one side, as though they were hearkening, but I suspected they were lending me their eyes rather than their ears, and cunningly watching when I should march off, while they affected to be thoroughly indifferent about that matter, occasionally picking their wings, and airily hopping from twig to twig, as if they were quite at their ease. One

thing is certain,—they were not inclined to profit by my admonition; for I had scarcely withdrawn ten paces, when, looking back, I saw, first one, then two, then three, and at length the whole covey, dropping down from the bushes into the corn-field, where, I'll warrant, they lost no time in redeeming that which they *had* lost in listening to my unseasonable croaking.

CHAPTER II.

A PAUSE is so sweet and refreshing in the midst of the most delightful entertainment, that I could not find in my heart to deny my readers a rest here, though I allowed myself none on my journey. At their own leisure, therefore, after travelling through the last chapter, they may follow me in the present, which, like all second parts, I may safely promise them shall be longer and duller than the first.

Leaving the incorrigible birds to the children and the rattle, I proceeded about half a mile, in that kind of weariness of thought, which naturally follows lively excitement, and induces the mind to seek repose from active meditation in vague reverie. This agreeable languor was presently dissipated by the appearance of two ranges of small houses on

contrary sides of the road. I stood awhile listening to the sounds that issued from them,—of looms and spinning wheels on the one hand, and the reverberation of hammers on the anvil from a blacksmith's shop, on the other; — the music of industry, not particularly pleasant or offensive to the ear, but amusing to the workman, and like the monotonous purling of a stream, or clicking of a clock, announcing *progress;* with this difference,—the stream flows on for ever, the clock goes day and night, but the motion of labour is continually drawing nearer to rest.

Here I gazed leisurely about me. Beyond the houses on the right, at the distance of a few fields, behind a straight row of lime-trees, I discovered the small spire, the weather-beaten roof, and the grey walls of an ancient episcopal chapel, whose narrow windows threw solitary spangles of sunshine through the intercepting foliage. To the left, at more than thrice the distance, on the knoll of a common, stood another chapel of ease, built within my own remembrance, whose freestone

walls, blue-slated roof, and elegant belfry, conspicuous to all the country, presented a naked contrast to the sheltered and homely structure on the opposite but lower eminence. In both cases, the hamlets belonging to these places of worship lay concealed from my view on the further slopes of the respective hills; so that the one seemed a house of prayer among the cultured fields, the other a church in the wilderness. My active imagination, however, soon divided their distinct townships with the road which I was traversing, and appointed the two or three dwellings on either side to the chapel adjacent. "On this spot then," thought I, "though the poor inhabitants pay their vows to the same God at separate altars, on the sabbath, yet at home, and through life, they are but one community,—neighbours, friends, relations;—playmates in infancy, in childhood companions at school, in youth they intermarry, and in manhood their families again cross the way to form new connexions: but in death they are divided; *these* are carried to rest with their

forefathers beneath the shade of yonder solemn trees, while *those* sleep as quietly under the sunshine in the open burying ground on the waste. It is of little moment where we dwell, and of less where we are laid at last; the dust of the dearest kindred will feel no separation in the grave; there is peace *there* till the day of judgment. But when the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised, these cottagers again, with the whole human race, shall stand before God. Ah! then, will there not be another separation to the right hand and to the left of the judge, irrespective of the sides of the road which they once occupied, the chapel where they worshipped, or the places of their interment? And that separation will not be like their separation in life, the breadth of this highway, but the space between heaven and hell; nor like their separation in death, for a few years, but for ever." The reflection was so awful, that the light seemed to grow dim in the firmament, and the earth to fail beneath my feet. I went on, trembling

and dismayed, and asking myself,—"On which hand shall I be placed?"

The gloom gradually passed away, and the bright side, both of time and eternity, shone forth upon me; tenderness succeeded terror; the kindest feelings towards my fellow-creatures took possession of my breast, and I could scarcely forbear saying aloud, as I truly did in my heart, to every human being whom I met, "God bless you!" It was a busy path, being market-day in the town which I had left. Many people had gone by me, but it was the children that chiefly attracted my notice; their fathers and mothers, uncles and aunts, I had hitherto regarded no more than the mile-stones,—just to look at each and go forward to the next; they were every-day folks on every-day errands; indeed, of adults, as the world goes on such a road as this, I can make little or nothing, but of the young, any thing I please. It is, in fact, less interesting to view men and women at their best, or past it, and guess what they were in petticoats, than to

scrutinize the features, or mark the vagaries of their offspring, and imagine what they may be in maturity. A child is a promise, a man is a disappointment, and it is exhilarating to hope forward in a hundred instances, with the probability of being deceived in ninety-nine; while, to look backward even on one hope fled for ever, is present death to every hope beside. Children, while they are such, are the children of nature; their actions, speech, looks, passions, are unaffected and unrestrained, — the genuine expression of genuine feelings; — the up-grown are creatures of habit, slaves of business or pleasure; at all times trying to conceal something in themselves, and to pry out something which others want to conceal. Yet there are exceptions, and when you meet one who appears to have seen better days, or distant lands, or hard service, if you are a ruminator like me, you will as eagerly trace back his former condition, as you will anticipate the future lot of a lively and beautiful child.

While these very speculations were passing through my mind, I was dazzled with a flash, as sudden and brilliant as lightning, across my eyes; and looking up, I had just time to check myself from running foul against an Italian pedlar, with looking-glasses and pictures sparkling to the sun in one hand, a staff in the other, and a great square wicker basket at his back, so well furnished within, that he stooped as he trudged along beneath the burthen. He was not less startled than myself, and, laden as he was, immediately offered to step aside to make way for me; unluckily, I was attempting to shew him the same civility, and we nearly bobbed noses together again; both instantly resumed our former positions, and a third time encountered full abreast; at length, after a pleasantly vexatious game of see-saw, this way and that, such as the reader himself may have enjoyed on some happy occasion,—if he has not, I wish he never may, for it is a genuine "misery of human life,"—I effected my escape, by duck-

ing under the western corner of his wicker basket, and plunging desperately through the mire of the carriage-road. When I had recovered footing on the causeway, I began to surmise, — "who may this poor wanderer be?" for his physiognomy had struck me, and in spite of the mean and mercenary ideas connected with his calling, his lineage associated him in my mind with the heroes, the painters, the poets, and the musicians of modern Italy, yielding to none in the world since the revival of letters. Thither was my spirit instantly transported. The Alps rose before me, with their diadems of ice glittering above the region of storms and vapours in the eternal serenity of heaven. Far below I beheld their rocky girdles, and their sunward slopes, pouring forth a thousand springs, that lost themselves in each other, and, spreading fertility in their course, became magnificent rivers through the plains of Lombardy. South-westward, in the lap of a warm and flowery glen, I marked a little vine-mantled cottage, with a row of bee-

hives at either end, where still resided the aged parents of the rover whom I had just left. That rover my fancy represented, in the days of his boy-hood, sauntering along the Alpine vallies, piping to his little flock, or scaling the crags that over-hung him, in quest of his strayed goats, as fearless and almost as agile as themselves. In one of these excursions, I saw him rescue a kid from a wolf that sprang upon it before his face. He grappled the ruffian by the throat, and dashed him head-long down a precipice, whither the eye could not steadily follow his fall, while his howlings were re-echoed from a hundred caves.—What drove the gallant youth from home?—The villainous conscription!—for Buonaparte was then in his glory. He escaped to England; and here, becoming acquainted with those tribes of his vagrant countrymen whom we meet every where, like him, hawking their tawdry wares, they taught him *their* way to wealth. I will not disturb the romance of my meditation by enquiring whether it is an honourable one;

I hope he is plodding on his last stage, and having obtained what will be affluence to him, I am determined to believe that he will return to his native land as soon as he can dispose of his present stock of trinkets and trumpery, which constitute the luxuries of the poor. The contents of that huge basket will make twenty cottages gay with pictures, and thrice that number of cottagers vain with finery of buckles, and ribbons, and spectacles. Then will he embark with a fair wind for Calais, and travel unafraid through the very heart of France, the country which, aforetime, he could not think upon without shuddering. On some fine evening, when the tops of the Alps, in the glory of sunset, resemble the gates of Paradise, his hoary-headed parents will be sitting beneath the poplars on the banks of their native stream, recalling his looks, repeating his words, recounting his deeds; — how dutiful a son he was to them, how kind to his neighbours, how courteous to every one; — how he was followed by the sheep, and fondled

by the old dog that lies at their feet, and looks them in the face, as if he understood what they were talking about. Then, while their hearts are breaking with tenderness at the remembrance of the past, he will come into their presence so quietly, that he will be kneeling, and asking their blessing before they discover him. He went away a youth, he returns a man; but he is known, first by his voice, then by every feature and gesture, in succession. They meet in a triple embrace, parents and son forgetting themselves in each other. There is a maiden, too,—but the instant that *her* image rose upon my brain, the whole illusion vanished, and the truth only remained,—the truth, that I knew nothing, either of the man or his history. When I turned my head to view him again, he was gone.

My curiosity was soon attracted by a truly English spectacle. Several shrill voices eagerly shouting to one another made me look over a gate into an adjacent field, where half a dozen boys were trying to fly a kite.

The wind was variable, and it seemed to require more dexterity than appeared among them to effect their purpose. There is nothing, — not even the drum and fife, — that more ardently engages the young of our sex than a kite. The anxiety, animation, hope, joy, disappointment, rapture, which alternately lighted up and clouded the countenances of this little group, amused me exceedingly, and every motion of pain or pleasure which they manifested I experienced by sympathy. First, one seizing it at the junction of the tail and body, bore it aloft, running after another who held the string at the height of his arm, while the train rustled along the ground. At a suitable place, the former launched the kite with all his force into the air; it reeled like a drunkard, and fell foul upon the next hedge. Being quickly disentangled, another lad attempted to direct the capricious aëronaut, and gave such energy to its ascent, that for a while it appeared determined to fly in the face of the sun; but abruptly whisking its serpentine tail, and

projecting a long parabola, it toppled over the fence into the road, where, fortunately missing my head, it lay flat at my feet. Notwithstanding some inconvenient delay, I was resolved to see the end of the sport; and presently a third adventurer, rather delighted than disheartened by the failure of his companions, grasped the kite, and from a little eminence, sent it off with so happy an impulse, that slowly, steadily, gracefully undulating upwards, it gradually reached the height of its tether, and shone in the sun-beams like a white meteor against the dark blue sky. The youngsters shouted and clapped their hands, running beside their leader, with heads leaning backward, and eyes upturned, hailing it on its flight; while he who had successfully dispatched it, standing alone on the higher ground, with his arms a-kimbo, was not less elevated than the kite itself, and looked down upon his comrades as he might have done if he had been flying upon its back through the firmament.

"Well," quoth I to myself, — for I never

want somebody to converse with when I am alone, though I confess that I often do, when I am in company: — "well," quoth I to myself, "the fortunes of these boys may resemble their performances. He who ran the kite into the thorn-bushes at the outset, may run himself first into debt, then into gaol, on setting out in life, and never again recover his own or any body else's good opinion. He who threw it over the hedge will be a highflying speculator, but his credit suddenly failing, he will become bankrupt, and involve hundreds who have placed confidence in him in ruin and distress. But that gallant rogue, who guided it into the free element at once, must be one, who by noble enterprize, having talents united with integrity, will raise himself to wealth and honours; — nay, who knows but he may one day be mayor of * * * * *."— "So he may," whispered a misgiving suspicion within me, "and yet be the greatest blockhead in the country, while (for omens are best interpreted like dreams, by the rule of contraries,) the poor boy whom you have

scorned for miscarrying in the first hedge that crossed his way, may have the genius of Robert Burns, though he should never rise to the dignity of an exciseman; and he who precipitated the kite into the road may be a "Village Hampden," who will withstand "the little tyrant of his fields," and though he fall in the contest, will leave an example which all must admire, and those that please may follow — at their peril!"

Before I could settle these lads in the world to my satisfaction, I had entered upon a small common, or rather a large village-green, for on each side of the road at unequal distances, the habitations of men and animals were scattered, almost every house having a stye in front of it: indeed, the whole neighbourhood seemed on visiting terms; the swine went familiarly grunting into their masters' parlours, as though they were inmates of the family, and the younger brood of the human species crept on all fours, or played at hide and seek, in the pig-cotes. While I was admiring the frank and simple

manners of these villagers, so much resembling those of the golden age, when men and hogs ate acorns together under the same tree, I heard a cart jolting by on the road. It was drawn by a single horse, and driven by a ragged boy, about a dozen years old, whose hair, like the snaky locks of Medusa, stared in every direction through the crannies of his hat. He jogged whistling along, happier than a king, by the side of his team, which was his kingdom, occasionally flourishing with magisterial authority a long whip, the sceptre of his power. In the cart were two nursling children, not fit to be trusted a minute beyond the mother's eye. Both were on their legs; one leaning over the right side, watching the revolution of the wheel, and trying to touch it with his finger; the other was leaning, in like manner, in front and *gee-ho-ing* the horse to make him go faster. I trembled at the sight, and thought, "What a mercy, what a miracle it is, that a single child is reared! they are always in danger; surely they have guardian angels to

watch over them when fathers and mothers are listless or sleeping." Suddenly a dog appeared to dart across the way, just under the horse's head, and the animal being frightened set off full speed; the children were violently dismounted; that which was looking at the wheel fell under it; the other was flung to a considerable distance. The boy who had been driving, ran crying for help after the horse and cart, but no help was to be had; the people in the houses, and the boys and girls out of doors, might have been dead or insane: not a hand or a foot, not a voice or an eye, was raised towards the spot. For my part, I was petrified with horror, and could no more move a joint than if a nightmare had been upon me. All this was done in a moment, but that moment was an hour, and how much longer it might have lasted I know not, had I not been roused from my trance, by a sensation in the calf of the leg as if a viper had bitten me. It was only some dozen spikes of a great thistle, against which I had started, as I recoiled from the vision of

miseries before me, — for it was *only* a vision! When I looked for it again, it had vanished; the cart was drawling along as before; the children were alive, and leaning out of it, unconscious of harm; and the lad, occasionally cracking his whip, was whistling a melancholy air, in the minor key, to the footfall of the horse, which was pacing as soberly on the straight-forward road as if he were in the circle of a mill.

My morbid imagination had duped me so flagrantly in this instance, that I was equally vexed and ashamed at my weakness. I immediately grew dull, called in my thoughts, and forbade them to play any more to the end of the journey; accordingly, I went the three remaining miles as disregardful of every thing and every body as if I had been a sleep-walker. I traversed the common, leaving the brick kilns on the left hand, went steadily down the declivity beyond, passed the mill and the old stone bridge over the brook in the hollow, and having climbed the opposite hill, I coasted along by the park-wall; then

entering the great wood to the west of the turnpike, I crossed the single plank foot-bridge over the rivulet without water below, turned on *this* side through some meadows, then on *that* up a steep eminence, from the top of which I proceeded on table-land through a narrow lane to the pretty hamlet where my old nurse resided. She met me at her door, bade me welcome, kissed me, and was as kind to me as a mother.

A TALE WITHOUT A NAME.

THE following stanzas may very properly have a place in "*Prose by a Poet*," as they claim little affinity to verse beyond metre and rhyme, which have only been adopted as the more convenient vehicle for a subject not easily manageable in any form.

PART I.

HE had no friend on earth but thee,
No hope in heaven above;
By day and night, o'er land and sea,
No solace but thy love.
He wander'd here, he wander'd there,
A fugitive like Cain;
And mourn'd, like him, in dark despair,
A brother rashly slain.

As from a dream, in pale surprize,
Waking, the murderer stood;
He met the victim's closing eyes;
He saw his brother's blood:
That blood pursued him on his way,
A living, murmuring stream;
Those eyes before him flash'd dismay
With ever-dying gleam.

In vain he strove to fly the scene,
And breathe beyond that time;
Tormented memory glared between;
Immortal seem'd his crime:
His thoughts, his words, his actions all,
Turn'd on his dying brother;
That hour he never could recall,
Nor ever live another.

To him the very clouds stood still,
The ground appear'd unchanged;
One light was ever on the hill,—
That hill where'er he ranged:
He heard the brook, the birds, the wind,
Sound in the glen below;
The selfsame tree he cower'd behind,
He struck the selfsame blow.

Yet was not reason quite o'erthrown,
Nor so benign his lot,
To dwell in frenzied grief alone,
All other woe forgot:
The world within, and world around,
Clash'd in perpetual strife;
Present and past close-interwound
Through his whole thread of life.

That thread, inextricably spun,
Might reach eternity;
For ever doing, never done,
That dreadful deed might be!
This was a worm that would not die,
A fire unquenchable;
Ah! whither can the sufferer fly?
Fly from a bosom-hell?

He had no friend on earth but thee,
No hope in heaven above;
By day and night, o'er land and sea,
No refuge but thy love:
Not time nor place, nor crime nor shame,
Could change thy spousal truth,
In desolate old age the same
As in the joy of youth.

Not death, but infamy, to 'scape,
He left his native coast;
To death in any other shape
He long'd to yield the ghost:
But infamy his steps pursued,
And haunted every place,
While death, though like a lover wooed,
Fled from his loath'd embrace.

He wander'd here, he wander'd there,
And she, his angel-guide,—
The silent spectre of Despair,
With Mercy at his side;
Whose love and loveliness alone
Shed comfort round his gloom,—
Pale as the monumental stone
That watches o'er a tomb.

PART II.

They cross'd the blue Atlantic flood;
A storm their bark assail'd;
Stern through the hurricane he stood,
All hearts, all efforts fail'd:

With horrid hope he eyed the waves,
That flash'd like wild-fires dim;
But ocean, midst a thousand graves,
Denied a grave to him.

On shore he sought delirious rest
In crowds of busy men,
When suddenly the livid pest
Came reeking from its den:
The city vanish'd at its breath;
He caught the taint, and lay
A suppliant at the gate of death;
Death spurn'd the wretch away.

In solitude of streams and rocks,
Mountains and forests dread,
Where Nature's free and fearless flocks
At her own hand are fed,
They hid their pangs; but oh! to live
In peace,—in peace to die,—
Was more than solitude could give,
Or earth's whole round supply.

The swampy wilderness their haunt,
Where fiery panthers prowl,
Serpents their fatal splendours flaunt,
And wolves and lynxes howl;

Where alligators throng the floods,
And reptiles, venom-arm'd,
Infest the air, the fields, the woods,
They slept, they waked unharm'd.

Where the Red Indians, in their ire,
With havoc mark the way,
Skulk in dark ambush, waste with fire,
Or gorge inhuman prey;
Their blood no wild marauder shed;
Secure without defence,
Alike, were his devoted head,
And her meek innocence.

Weary of loneliness, they turn'd
To Europe's carnage-field;
At glory's Moloch-shrine he burn'd
His hated breath to yield:
He plunged into the hottest strife;
He dealt the mightiest blows;
To every foe exposed his life:
Powerless were all his foes.

The iron thunder-bolts, with wings
Of lightning, shunn'd his course;
Harmless the hail of battle rings,
The bayonet spends its force;

The sword to smite him flames aloof,
Descends, — but strikes in vain;
His branded front was weapon-proof,
He wore the mark of Cain.

"I cannot live, — I cannot die!"
He mutter'd in despair;
"This curse of immortality,
O could I quit — or bear!"
Of every frantic hope bereft,
To meet a nobler doom,
One refuge, — only one, was left, —
To storm the unyielding tomb.

Through his own breast the passage lay,
The steel was in his hand;
But fiends upstarting fenced the way,
And every nerve unmann'd:
The heart that ached its blood to spill,
With palsying horror died;
The arm rebellious to his will,
Hung wither'd at his side.

O woman! wonderful in love,
Whose weakness is thy power,
How did thy spirit rise above
The conflict of that hour!

She found him prostrate: not a sigh
Escaped her tortured breast,
Nor fell one tear-drop from her eye,
Where torrents were repress'd.

Her faithful bosom stay'd his head,
That throbb'd with fever-heat;
Her eye serene compassion shed,
Which his could never meet:
Her arms enclasp'd his shuddering frame,
While at his side she kneel'd,
And utter'd nothing but his name,
Yet all her soul reveal'd.

Touch'd to the quick, he gave no sign
By gentle word or tone;
In him affection could not shine,
'Twas fire within a stone,
Which no collision by the way
Could startle into light,
Though the poor heart that held it, lay
Wrapt in Cimmerian night.

It was not always thus;—erewhile
The kindness of his youth,
His brow of innocence, and smile
Of unpretending truth,

Had left such long delight, — that she
  Would oft recall that time,
And live in golden memory,
  Unconscious of his crime.

Though self-abandon'd now to fate,
  The passive prey of grief,
Sullen, and cold and desolate,
  He shunn'd, he spurn'd relief;
Still onward in its even course
  Her pure affection press'd,
And pour'd with soft and silent force
  Its sweetness through his breast.

Thus Sodom's melancholy lake
  No turn or current knows;
Nor breeze, nor billow sounding, break
  The horror of repose:
While Jordan, through the sulph'rous brine,
  Rolls a translucent stream,
Whose waves with answering beauty shine
  To every changing beam.

PART III.

At length the hardest trial came:
Again they cross the seas;
The waves their wilder fury tame,
The storm becomes a breeze.
Homeward their easy course they hold,
And now in radiant view,
The purple forelands, tinged with gold,
Larger and lovelier grew.

The vessel on the tranquil tide
Then seem'd to lie at rest,
While Albion, in maternal pride,
Advanced with open breast
To bid them welcome on the main:
——Both shrunk from her embrace:
Cold grew the pulse through every vein;
He turn'd away his face.

Silent, apart, on deck he stands
In ecstasy of woe;
A brother's blood is on his hands,
He sees, he hears it flow.

Wilder than ocean, tempest-wrought,
Though deadly calm his look;
His partner read his inmost thought,
And strength her limbs forsook.

Then first, then last, a pang she proved
Too exquisite to bear:
She fell — he caught her — strangely moved,
Roused from intense despair;
Alive to feelings long unknown,
He wept upon her cheek,
And call'd her in as kind a tone
As Love's own lips could speak.

Her spirit heard that voice, and felt
Arrested on its flight;
Back to the mansion where it dwelt,
Back from the gates of light,
That open'd Paradise in trance,
It hasten'd from afar,
Quick as the startled seaman's glance
Turns from the polar star.

She breathed again, look'd up, and lo!
Those eyes that knew not tears,
With streams of tenderness o'erflow, —
That heart, through hopeless years

The den of fiends in darkness chain'd,
That would not, dared not, rest,
Affection, fervent, pure, unfeign'd,
In speechless sighs express'd.

Content to live, since now she knew
What love believed before;
Content to live, since he was true,
And love could ask no more, —
This vow to righteous heaven she made:
" Whatever ills befall,
" Patient, unshrinking, undismay'd,
" I'll freely suffer all."

They land — they take the wonted road;
By twice ten years estranged,
The trees, the fields, their old abode,
Objects and men were changed:
Familiar faces, forms endear'd,
Each well-remember'd name,
From earth itself had disappear'd,
Or seem'd no more the same.

The old were dead, the young were old;
Children to men had sprung:
And every eye to them was cold,
And silent every tongue.

Friendless, companionless, they roam
Amidst their native scene;
In drearier banishment at home,
Than savage climes had been.

PART IV.

Yet worse she fear'd; — nor long they lay
In safety or suspense; —
Unslumbering Justice seized her prey,
And dragg'd the culprit thence:
Amid the dungeon's darken'd walls,
Down on the cold damp floor,
A wreck of misery he falls,
Close by the bolted door.

And she is gone — while he remains
Bewilder'd in the gloom,
To brood in solitude and chains
Upon a felon's doom:
Yes, she is gone — and he forlorn
Must groan the night away,
And long to see her face at morn,
More welcome than the day.

The morning comes — she re-appears
With grief-dissembling wiles;
A sad serenity of tears,
An agony of smiles,
Her looks assume: his spectral woes
Are vanish'd at the sight;
And all within him seem'd repose,
And all around him light.

Never, since that mysterious hour,
When kindred blood he spilt, —
Never had aught in nature power
To soothe corroding guilt,
Till the glad moment, when she cross'd
The threshold of that place,
And the wild rapture, when he lost
Himself in her embrace.

Even then, while on her neck he hung,
Ere yet a word they spoke,
As by a fiery serpent stung,
Away at once he broke:
Frenzy, remorse, confusion burst
In tempest o'er his brain;
He felt accused, condemn'd, accurst,
He was — himself again.

Days, weeks, and months had mark'd the flight
Of Time's unwearied wing,
Ere winter's long lugubrious night
Relented into spring:
To him who pined for death's release,
An age the space between!—
To her who could not hope for peace,
How fugitive the scene!

In vain she chid forewarning fears,
In vain repress'd her woe;
Alone, unseen, her sighs, her tears,
Would freely heave and flow:
Yet ever in his sight, by day,
Her looks were calm and kind,
And when at evening torn away,
She left her soul behind.

Hark! hark!—the judge is at the gate;
The trumpet's thrilling tones
Ring through the cells, the voice of fate
Re-echoed thence in groans.
The sound hath reach'd her ear—she stands,
In marble-chillness dumb;
He too hath heard, and smites his hands:
"I come," he cried, "I come."

Before the dread tribunal now,
Firm in collected pride,
Without a scowl upon his brow,
Without a pang to hide,
He stood — superior in that hour
To recreant fear and shame;
Peril itself inspired the power
To brave the worst that came.

'Twas like the tempest, when he sought
Fate in the swallowing flood;
'Twas like the battle, when he fought
For death through seas of blood:
A violence that soon must break
The heart which would not bend, —
A heart that almost ceased to ache
In hope of such an end!

On him, while every eye was fix'd;
And every lip express'd,
Without a voice, the rage unmix'd
That boil'd in every breast;
It seem'd as though that deed abhorr'd,
In years far distant done,
Had cut asunder every cord
Of fellowship but one. —

That one indissolubly bound
A feeble woman's heart;
Faithful in every trial found,
Long had she borne her part:
Now at his helpless side alone,
Girt with infuriate crowds,
Like the new moon her meekness shone,
Pale through a gulph of clouds.

Ah! well might every bosom yearn
Responsive to her sigh;
And every visage dark and stern
Soften beneath her eye:
Ah! well might every lip of gall
The unutter'd curse suspend;
Its tones on her in blessings fall,
Its breath in prayer ascend.

"Guilty!"—that thunder-striking sound
All shudder'd when they heard;
A burst of horrid joy around
Hail'd the tremendous word:—
Check'd in a moment,—she was there!
The instinctive groan was hush'd;
Nature, that forced it, cried "forbear!"
Indignant Justice blush'd.

PART V.

One woe is past, another speeds
To consummate his doom;
The third day's farewell-beam recedes;
She watch'd it into gloom:
That night, how swift in its career
It flew from sun to sun!
That night, the last of many a dear,
And many a dolorous one!—

That night, by special grace she wakes
In the lone convict's cell,
With him, for whom the morrow breaks
To light to heaven or hell.
Dread sounds of preparation rend
The dungeon's ponderous roof;
The hammer's doubling strokes descend,
The scaffold creaks aloof.

She watch'd his features through the shade,
Which glimmering embers broke;
Both from their inmost spirit pray'd;
They pray'd, but seldom spoke.

Moments, meanwhile, were years to him;
Her grief forgot their flight,
Till on the hearth the fire grew dim:
She turn'd, — and lo! the light: —

The light less welcome in the skies,
The loveliest light of morn,
Than the dark glare of felon-eyes
Through grated cells forlorn:
The cool fresh breeze from heaven that blew,
The free lark's mounting strains,
She felt in drops of icy dew,
She heard, like groans and chains.

"Farewell!" — 'twas but a word, yet more
Was utter'd in that sound,
Than love had ever told before,
Or sorrow ever found.
They kiss like meeting flames; — they part,
Like flames asunder driven;
Lip cleaves to lip, heart beats on heart,
Till soul from soul is riven.

Quick hurried thence — the sullen bell
Its pausing peal began:
She hearkens, — 'tis the dying knell
Rung for the living man.

The mourner reach'd her lonely bower,
Fell on her widow'd bed,
And found, through one entrancing hour,
The quiet of the dead.

She woke, — and knew he was no more:
" Thy dream of life is past;
That pang with thee, that pang is o'er,
The bitterest and the last!"
She cried: — then scenes of sad amaze
Flash'd on her frenzied eye;
A field, a troop, a crowd to gaze,
A murderer led to die!

He eyes the ignominious tree,
Looks round, but sees no friend;
He sinks into eternity;
Is this — is this the end?
Her spirit follow'd him afar
Into the world unknown,
And saw him standing at that bar,
Where each must stand alone. —

Silence and darkness hide the rest:
Long she survived to mourn;
But peace sprang up within her breast
From trouble meekly borne:

And higher, holier joys had she,
A Christian's hopes above,
The prize of suffering constancy,
The crown of faithful love.

A MODEST CONFESSION;

IN A LETTER TO A LADY.

Dear Madam,

I KNOW you love me in my proper place; where that is, I leave you to guess at present; it may not, indeed, be in your eye, but, I assure you, it is not far from it. I am one of the race of Valetudinarians; and to such, you know, it is a pleasure to complain,—perhaps the only pleasure of their lives. Pray do not say, it is no pleasure to hear idle complaints, till you have heard mine. Who I am it will be no easy matter to tell in more words than *one*; I am determined, however, to hide myself in many, that you may find me out, before I name that, which, like a charm, will bring me in all my beauty and confusion upon you. In the first place, I am not a riddle; yet I am a very fit subject

for one, and, probably, while I describe myself, I may speak in paradoxes; but, unless I come across you, do not puzzle yourself as you go along; my signature at the close of this epistle will make all clear, and prove to your satisfaction, that I have an especial claim to the countenance of a lady.

I am neither a person, a passion, a being, nor an abstraction. I am neither a vice, nor a virtue; a member of the body, nor a quality of the mind; neither matter, nor spirit;—I am simply a motion! Without form I am seen; without substance I am felt; without intelligence I am the most infallible interpreter of the heart, though my meaning, unhappily, is so ambiguous that it is seldom understood in the right sense; and it is the misapprehension of this of which I principally complain. I come *from* the heart, and there it is that my presence is felt; for though I speak to the eye when I appear, the heart feels as if it were visible: and O! which of

"The wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best,'
(MILTON.

even of your own sex, could bear to have a fellow-creature prying into her secret thoughts, all of which, especially those she is most anxious to conceal, seem to be betrayed the moment she perceives me;—and, to tell the truth, they would be, if people understood my language as well as they pretend to do.

I am peculiar to humanity; no brute animal, however endowed with instinct or sensibility, being capable of distinguishing or exhibiting me. Though I belong to either sex, I am pre-eminently "the glory and the shame" of yours. The female who has discarded me from her affections, has lost all sense of honour, all purity of soul; yet she with whom I am most familiar is most abashed by my presence: her pulse throbs quicker at the thought of me; her fear brings me upon her, though I come most unwillingly. The mere recollection, that my being in company with her exposed her to public observation in a certain place, makes me visit her again in her closet. For the world she would not part with the fine feeling which draws me

to her; yet when I am present she would give the world that I were gone. This is the more remarkable, since there is nothing even in woman more graceful than I am, and oe would therefore imagine nothing more desirable, especially as I am, in the strictest sense, "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." The poet's eye beholds me in the rainbow, and in the rose; in the morning clouds, on the ocean at sunset; in the face of the full moon rising. The loveliest countenance grows more lovely the instant I approach it; indeed, it then becomes *so* lovely, that it is a sin to look upon it, because of the unimaginable anguish which a single glance inflicts on the fair sufferer whom I am overpowering.

I am always honest, but I am not always the sign of honesty; nay, I am so frequently associated with guilt, that the vulgar and superficial are apt to think me identified with it. This is so much the misery of my life, that I am only happy when I am put out of existence, which I may be, and yet revive

again a hundred times a day. Something not fit to be named, is roundly uttered, or insidiously hinted, in conversation, and I instinctively betray the consciousness of the young and the uncorrupted to the grossness of such an insult; hence, it is impudently inferred, that they know more than they ought, though it is only a proof that the wretch who provoked me knows less than *he* ought, either of good sense or good manners. Now can any thing be more unjust and injurious, than to call the swift witness of virtue, which I am, the evidence of depravity? Should this letter (though intended for none but yourself, fair lady, who happen to be just now reading it) ever fall into the hands of a man, who dares to speak what modesty dare not hear; who takes a pride in raising me to confound innocence; let him beware, lest I rise up to his face in the day of judgment, and overwhelm him with everlasting shame and contempt.

Hypocrisy may affect me, and force my resemblance where I never am found, but it

must be a dull eye that cannot distinguish her false colours, and despise her for deceiving herself in wearing them. Of all their other foibles and weaknesses your inimitable sex may be occasionally vain:—a lisp, a mole, a cast of the eye, may be a subject of self-complacency, for nothing is too little or too mean for vanity;—but you are never vain of me,—except where I am *not*. Then, indeed, a prude or a wanton may assume me to conceal the want of me; but the exertion costs more than the counterfeit is worth, and as it is made at the hazard of an apoplexy, I am seldom violated in this way. But I must further exemplify some of my sufferings.

Among half a dozen children, one has been playing a mischievous prank, unknown to the rest. They are suddenly interrupted in their sport by a parent or tutor, who denounces the offence, and inquires who has done it. Four of them have presence of mind to exculpate themselves on the spot; the rogue appears quite indifferent, and escapes by cunning equivocation or audacious denial;

the sixth, the least likely in the group to commit such a trespass, feels me rushing upon him; I cannot help it; the effort to repel me aggravates his calamity; he trembles, sobs, bursts into tears, and is speechless. Thus, though the fault cannot be brought home to him, he must bear the imputation, for no other reason than because he could not bear it.

A friend, with whose credit our own is by sympathy involved, says a silly thing before strangers; I punish *you* for it, and you do for him what he ought to do for himself.—In a large mixed company, some scandalous or dishonest transaction is talked of—some absent person is the subject of censure,—some folly is mercilessly ridiculed,—some vice is ostentatiously exposed. Now there are people, of both sexes, whose nerves are so miserably sensitive, that their animal spirits on these occasions are apt to be suddenly discomposed, and they manifest such ineffable perturbations as may easily be mistaken for the workings of an evil conscience, by those

hardier mortals, who are at all times so perfectly at peace with themselves, as never to suspect that any thing can be suspected of them, inconsistent with their own high character in their own esteem. These are very distressing cases, in which the writhings of morbid sensibility are regarded as symptoms of self-accusing guilt, startled into remorse, like the king's feelings in Hamlet, on seeing his crime represented in a play,—though the very reverse is the truth: these, too, are cases more common than the majority of mankind, who are happily not blest with nerves of gossamer and spirits of ether, imagine. Here then, the first time since the creation that I have spoken in the dialect of men, (seeing my own symbolical form of expression is so liable to be misinterpreted,) I warn you, and all to whom these presents may come,—to avoid hasty and unworthy opinions concerning persons, otherwise amiable, on presumptions so slight and uncertain as these.

I told you before that I was not a passion; yet of every passion I am the earliest and the

surest symptom. In love, when the youth tells all that is in his heart to her who knew it all before he opened his lips, I give a warmth to his eloquence which no art can rival, and a voice to her silence which no tongue can utter. In eagerness of hope, you behold me glowing with the liveliest emotion: and at a sudden disappointment deepening almost to blackness. — In envy, I rather vanish than appear; when I am gone, you remember that I have been, and I am followed by an image of ghastlier hue than that which the grave hides in the features of the dead, and from which the living shrink with equal horror. — In pride, I burn with a fierce and crimson flame, which electrifies the eye of him that dares to look upon me. In rage, I flash abroad like lightning, followed by instantaneous thunder. — In jealousy, I am wild and wavering, gleaming out of darkness, and sinking into it like the meteor of the marsh. — In revenge, I explode like the fires of Vesuvius, smothered at length in smoke and ashes. — In joy, at the meeting of friends

long parted, I come like the glory of heaven upon them, making their faces as the faces of angels one to another. O then,—perhaps then only,—am I welcome, welcome and delightful beyond expression! On such occasions alone, were I left to my choice, would I visit you, and those whom you love, for I cannot but believe that they resemble you in all that endears you to me.

I dare say, that you have found me out long ago; if not, read the first five words in this epistle, and then look where you are sure never to encounter any thing ugly,—into your glass, and you will perhaps see *me*. I ought to be ashamed of having troubled you at such great length, but I will not aggravate the offence by an apology:—you are a lady, and can excuse

A BLUSH.

THE ACORN;

AN

APOLOGUE.

" Thou wast a bauble once; — a cup and ball,
Which babes might play with: ——
* * * * * *
Time was, when, settling on thy leaf, a fly
Could shake thee to the root; — and time has been,
When tempests could not."

COWPER'S *Yardley Oak.*

A HIGH wind shook the last acorn from an old oak. In the following night, the tree itself was thrown down by the tempest. It had lived through five centuries; but though in that period it had produced millions of acorns, they had all been devoured by swine, or perished where they fell. Yet there was a prophecy, nearly coeval with the Deluge, in the family, that from this oak there should spring a mighty forest. Age after age, the venerable

tree, declining in strength, and decaying till the shell of the trunk, and a stunted branch bearing six leaves and a single acorn, were all the insignia of its ancient honours;—age after age, the venerable tree looked anxiously for tokens of the fulfilment of this prediction, in the growth of some sapling from one of its acorns. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick; but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life." The old oak knew this; and to the last moment believing, that He who had promised could not fail to perform, it prayed even as it lay upon the ground, that its orphan offspring, the sole survivor of its stock, might in due time be quickened, shoot up, and become the parent of a great family. While it was praying, the sap ceased to circulate through its rigid veins, and the old oak died, lamented by all the trees within its horizon. A hoary-headed anchoret, who appeared as far stricken in years as the deceased itself, though only a babe in comparison with it, built an hermitage of the relics, in which he lived in peace, and died in hope.

The solitary acorn had fallen into the deserted nest of a field-mouse, and the gigantic trunk of its progenitor descending close by, crushed the turf over its head, and buried it alive. In darkness, alone, and immoveably wedged, the poor acorn gave itself over for lost: and yet it could not but remember how merrily it had lived on the little bough that nourished it, dancing in the breeze, drinking the dew, enjoying the light; it could not but remember the radiance of the sun, the beauty of the moon, the multitude of the stars, the verdure of the earth, the diversity of hill and dale, the river rolling at the root of its aged sire; it could not but remember the sounds of winds, and birds, and waters, the motions and colours of the clouds, the forms, voices, and actions of men and animals, which it had remarked during its non-age above; it could not but remember these, and remember them with regret,—regret acuminated to despair, in the apprehension that soon it must cease to hear, and see, and feel for ever.

While the acorn thus lay ruminating on its

helplessness, insignificance, and misery, it heard, or thought it heard, a voice from heaven, saying, "*Produce an oak!*"—"Produce an oak!" repeated the acorn to itself, "that is impossible;—no, it is *not*, for with God all things are possible; and if He commands, I *can* do it, and I *will*." The acorn had well learned this lesson of faith from its parent; and the Ruler of the universe always gives power to his creatures to do what He requires of them.

Immediately, through every nerve of its frame, it felt a spirit in motion; and the germ between its double kernel, though small enough to pass through the eye of a needle, received a consciousness, that a whole tree, roots, bark, bole, branches, leaves, and future fruit, lay folded with invisible minuteness in the fairy casket of its bulb. There was no self-delusion in the acorn; it had humbled itself, and it was about to be exalted. From that crisis, though the shell and the kernels began to waste away, the germ fed upon them; presently it swelled and put forth

fibres, which insinuated themselves through the soil, to secure a permanent foot-hold. In spring there appeared above ground a tiny shoot, which opened and presented

—— " two lobes protruding, pair'd exact."

The new-sprung plant was lower than the blades of grass, that rose in myriads round it, and looked down contemptuously upon it as a stranger, whose shape was uncouth, and whose language they did not understand.

Hours, days, weeks, months passed swiftly away, and so did the grasses, but the offspring of the acorn survived them all, and continued to grow till it became a sprig, with two full-formed leaves, and a bud between them, which tempted the bee and the butterfly to alight on their way, while the grasshopper chirped at its foot, or skipped over its head; nay, so vigorously did it push forth on the right hand and the left, as well as upward, that the cowslip was compelled to hang its blossoms awry, to make way for the sylvan intruder. Year followed year, till the sprig became a sap-

ling; and one generation of men died after another, while the sapling expanded into an oak, and the oak advanced through two centuries towards maturity. All this time the tree from the acorn had preserved its humility; though rooted in the earth, it aspired towards heaven; the nourishment which it drew from the soil, and the river and the atmosphere, it received as the bounty of Providence, and it was thankful.

Meanwhile the occasional lightnings played harmlessly round its head, and the tempest that agitated its boughs above, caused its roots to strike deeper below. Thus flourished the oak, the pride and admiration of all the country. The birds roosted and sang among its branches; the cattle chewed the cud, and reposed under its shelter; the lambkins in April ran races round the mount, which its roots had up-heaved from the plain. Man approached it with veneration, — and as he lifted up his eye at so magnificent a spectacle, he glanced beyond it to the sky, and thought, —

" How much glory can the Creator confer on one of his inferior works! How much of himself may be seen even in a tree!"

But one thing was wanting to consummate its felicity, the oak was barren; not an acorn had ever glistened in a rough cup, on the most luxuriant of its boughs, though their foliage spread thick and beautiful to the sun, and rustled musically in the breeze, — and though autumn in its turn brought a second spring of leaves, so delicately tinged, that they seemed the blossoms of the first.

Now it came to pass during a hard winter, that an old raven, driven by stress of weather from the sea-coast, and travelling far inland, alighted one clear cold morning on the topmost twig of the oak. Though stript of its summer attire, the grace and majesty of its form were the more striking, in the fair proportions of its tall stem, naked boughs, and innumerable fibres, all in motion, and each distinctly pictured against the dark blue firmament. These were here and there tufted

with brown clusters of dry leaves, of which now one, then another fell,

——" slowly circling through the waving air,"

to the ground, where thousands of their brethren lay strewn at the feet of their parent, in all stages of decay; some brilliantly spangled with pearls of ice on their net-work skeletons; while many, yet perfect in form, were so curiously pencilled with hoar-frost, that every vein was distinguishable. The raven, who was thin of plumage, and iron-grey with years, looked as if he had seen better days, but would never see such again. Age and adversity had soured his disposition, if ever it had been good, so that he could no longer behold happiness without envy, nor contemplate innocence without hankering to betray it. While he sate shivering in the wind, that lifted up his ragged feathers with every breath, his lank sides were exposed to the curiosity of the chaffinches and tom-tits that hopped on the lower boughs, peeping askance at the stranger, wondering whence

he came, and thinking not a whit the less handsomely of themselves and their gay plumage, in comparison with him. But when they chanced to meet the flash of his keen dark eye, they felt as if fascinated by a rattlesnake, and durst not move till he had turned it away in scorn of their detected impertinence.

Now Ralph was a soothsayer, and many an evil omen had he exhibited to the poor fishermen on the coast, where his haunt was; soaring delighted in anticipation of the storm, watching its horrors from his fastness in the rocky cliffs, and preying when it was over on the carcases of shipwrecked mariners. As he understood all languages *not* spoken by man, he quickly entered into conversation with the oak, wormed out its whole history, and was sagacious enough to discover what the tree itself scarcely suspected, that, innocent and happy as it was, secret anxiety had begun to corrode its heart, lest, notwithstanding its health, strength, and virtue, and notwithstanding the ancient prophecy, it might at length die without issue, there being little

hope, after such an age of sterility, that it would yet become fruitful.

The subtle tempter caught his cue, and by a train of sophistry, of which history hath not furnished the particulars, (probably lest others who are not trees should be beguiled by them,) he succeeded in persuading the oak, that it was so high a favourite of Providence, that the course of nature was suspended with respect to its destination, and it was either governed by such a mysterious heavenly influence, or had within itself such an original power, that it could *do* or *be* whatsoever it pleased: — thus, instead of propagating its species by acorns, it might continue to increase in bulk, in breadth, in depth, in strength, in every thing, through an illimitable period to come, till the heavens were filled with its branches, and the earth over canopied with its verdure.

All this was very fine; what heart of oak would be proof against such an assault? Our simple tree listened unsuspectingly to the shrewd insinuations, and soon indeed began

to fancy that all that it was it had made itself; wherefore it had only to go on for ever growing by its own volition, to become as great and glorious as the raven had prognosticated! "If," said the poor dupe within itself, "when I was an acorn I wrought myself out of the ground, and have since risen by my own choice to be the noblest tree in the universe, why should I rest here, and not go on to magnify my form till my trunk towers above the clouds, and sustains in mid-heaven a burthen of boughs more numerous and ample than the forests on a thousand hills? thus in my own person accomplishing the ancient prophecy, instead of dying as my predecessors have done, in the vain hope of leaving an innumerable posterity."

Off flew the raven on the left hand, the moment his blandishment had prevailed, and the innocence of his victim had departed from it; leaving it to the indulgence of proud imaginations, and to the sad consequences of its apostacy. Early in the succeeding spring, at the first motion of the sap from the root,

when the noon-sun was warmly shining, the oak heard the same voice from heaven, which once called it out of the kernel, saying *now* to it, "*Produce acorns!*"—"*Produce acorns!*" indignantly it repeated; "*No*, I will produce *oaks!* My slenderest twig shall be a tree as mighty and as ramified as I myself am at this hour." Forthwith, as it fondly imagined, the vain boaster began to exert its native energies, and to strain through every fibre to enlarge its dimensions, but its bulk remained the same as before; it had reached a standard which it could never exceed. Spring vanished, summer followed, and autumn found the oak laden — with acorns. They were shaken to the ground; the swine devoured them; none took root. The oak was mortified, and enraged, but not humbled. "I will do better," it exclaimed, "next year;" and yet it scarcely believed itself, for there was an uncomfortable misgiving in its mind, which it durst not acknowledge, and feared to investigate.

The next year came, and the next year went. What did the oak? In spite of itself

it produced acorns as before,—but only to feed swine; not a single one was quickened. Still it might have hardened itself in rebellion against Providence; but in the middle of the first frosty night of the winter ensuing, it was awakened by a pang at the core as if an arrow of fire had glanced through it, and the wound had been instantly healed. An arrow *had* passed through it, but the wound was *not* healed; it was the arrow of death, and though the anguish at that time was only momentary, disease, decay, and dissolution had seized upon its vitals, never to relinquish their prey till they had consumed it atom by atom. The delinquent was roused to reflection; it was convinced at once both of its mortality and its guilt. Shame, remorse, and self-abhorrence followed; the whole winter was a season of humiliation and repentance, till the oak was contented to be what its Creator had made it, and resigned to suffer whatever his justice might inflict upon it.

The next spring had far advanced, but long storms and hard frosts had retarded vege-

tation, when, with the appearance of the first swallow, hope revisited the heart of the penitent; and a few weeks afterwards, while the nightingale was singing by moonlight from a lowly bush at its foot, the oak again heard the voice from heaven, more welcome than before, and sweeter than all the sounds in creation beside, saying, "*Produce a forest!*" "Thy will be done," replied the humbled tree; and immediately it felt as if a curse had been taken away, and a blessing poured down on its head.

Ere long its buds unfolded into leaves, and in autumn its branches were bowed down with the weight of fruit. Frequent and violent winds scattered the acorns abroad as they ripened, and heavy rains upon the adjacent hills bringing down the soil upon them, or washing them into temporary channels, many remained buried during the winter; and ere the harvest of another season was ready to be shaken down from the parent tree, a nursery of its descendants was springing up in the neighbouring fields. Year after year the

fruits of the oak were carried further, multiplied thicker, and rose higher, over the face of the country, till at the close of its third century it stood in the heart of the most flourishing forest in the world, itself to the eye in full vigour and beauty, and unrivalled by the stateliest of its progeny, though the death-wound, received a hundred years before, was invisibly undermining its strength, and hollowing its trunk.

About this time the old raven, who still survived, (and of whom, it was said, that, like the wandering Jew, he could neither die nor rest,) returned to that place, but his eye had grown so dim, and the scene was so changed, that he knew it not again, till the oak, amidst the forest of its sons, saluted him as he flew languidly over their heads. Ralph alighted on one of the arms of his former acquaintance, and silently listened to the secret of its story; at the close of which he uttered an ominous croak, fluttered for a moment on his perch, then fell headlong, and lay dead in the hollow of one of the protuberant roots of the tree,

which he had supposed had long ago been blasted by lightning or mildew, for exercising the presumption which he had taught it.

The oak yet lived two hundred years; its offspring and their descendants, to the fiftieth generation, still increasing and multiplying to the east and the west, to the north and the south, till the river on whose banks it stood, and which for thousands of years had rolled in broad sunshine through a champaign of meadows, became half overshadowed with the kindred branches that on either side stretched to intermingle their arms, but succeeded not entirely; a line of light, and a current of cool air passing uninterruptedly down the middle of the stream, amidst the depths of surrounding woodlands.

At length came the last hour of the sylvan patriarch. It fell not by the fury of the wind, like its father, nor by the assaults of the axe, as thousands of its juniors had fallen before it; but on a calm and golden summer eve, just as the sun went down, the oak sunk to the earth, under the quiet weight of years, and at

the gentle touch of nature, loosening at once its whole burthen of infirmities. It lay down so leisurely to repose, that the squirrel and her young, whose nest was in the hollow of the fork where its leaves and branches diverged from the bole, were undisturbed, and wondered next morning to find themselves so near the ground. The remains of the oak were not left to rot in dust and oblivion. Man knew their value: he removed them, and wrought the knotted fragment of the trunk, and the knee-timbers of the undecayed boughs, into the flanks and keel of a vessel, which afterwards circumnavigated the globe.

A

DIALOGUE OF THE ALPHABET.

On Saturday evening, August 31. 1816, the letters of the English alphabet met on a sheet of paper, — the last relict of reams which they had laid waste in the preceding week, — to take into consideration the hardships of the times, the causes of the same, and the best remedies to be applied. On one point, and one only, they were unanimous; namely, — that the times *were* hard; but in this they were only like their neighbours, for it would have been no easy matter at *that* juncture, or indeed any other, to find two sensible persons, much less six and twenty, in his Majesty's dominions, who would be better agreed, when they came to the details of this everlasting paradox, which we all acknowledge, most of us feel, yet none can explain to the satisfaction of any body except himself. But in

whatever esteem we may individually hold our own opinions, and with whatever contempt we may regard the opinions of other people, on this subject, those of the gentlemen of the *cris-cross-row* must at least be worthy of a hearing; for after all that has been, is, or may be said or written on any theme that can exercise the human intellect, it is they, and they alone, who, by their changes, combinations, and discordances, argue, confound, and determine all questions in morals, philosophy, politics, history, poetry, and every art and science, known or pursued among men. On this occasion, though seldom on any other, except on the face of a child's battledore, these *literati* spoke according to alphabetical precedence, delivering their sentiments with a gravity, if not with a wisdom, worthy of a bench of judges, consulting on a reserved case. And thus began great *A.*

A. I was always an advocate for war, for everlasting war; because by war alone nations arrive at the summit of glory, power, and prosperity. The experience of all Europe

during the last twenty years of hostilities proves this, and the same experience during the last year of peace confirms it. When, for example, did our country flourish so proudly as during the former period; — when have we beheld her drooping so rapidly, so hopelessly, as at this hour?

B. The very reason why you love war, is the reason why every body else should hate it. Like insanity, it is a terrible and unnatural excitement, which gives strength to perform prodigies of folly and rage, but ends in deplorable exhaustion, if not in positive death. What must have been the wickedness of the late war, when peace itself seems to follow it like a judgment upon the nation for having so long persevered in it! But peace is not a judgment, it is a mercy; even such a peace as we are now enjoying — suffering, I mean. Another year of war might have ruined us; as many years of tranquillity as we have had of contention would make Britain "the glory of all lands."

C. War may be very well in its place,

and peace may be the same; but I know not how it happens, whether we have one or the other, we are always wrong; for my part I can do with either; I am no party-man; give me a good trade, and I care not whether folks sleep intheir beds or on the field of battle.

D. A good trade! why you have had one; — at least you say so, now it is gone, and you are not likely to have a better; yet you were always complaining of customs, insurances, captures, orders in council, and burning decrees. Let a nation live within herself; let her husband her own resources, and cultivate her own estate. Speed the plough, the loom, and the anvil, say I.

E. So say I; but down with the markets! No corn bill, no wood bill, no property tax, no duties on horses, on leather, on this thing, on that thing, on every thing!

F. I am only half of your opinion; away indeed with duties on malt, and hops, and strong-beer; with landlords' tax, and tenants' tax; but give us corn-bills, wool-

bills, cheese-bills, butter-bills, — then we shall look up again. Dear corn was the staff of the war.

G. I am glad that it is broken, and broken on the backs of those that made it. Let us have cheap corn, — *that* is the "staff of life;" the other indeed is the staff of war, or rather the handle of Death's scythe, with which, both abroad and at home, he cuts down human lives in the blade, the green ear, the full grain, and the straw, indiscriminately. Let us have cheap corn, and then we shall go lightly under all our burthens.

H. Nay, there is one burthen, under which we cannot go at all, — except backward. Tithes, Mr. G., tithes are the plague of agriculture. They are worse to corn than black blight, red gum, mildew, weevils and wet harvests. That tithes are the double quintessence of the produce of land is plain, from the rosy gills of the parsons who riot on them, and the lantern-jaws of the farmers, who starve on the remainder.

I. Well said! Starving on nine-tenths,

and rioting on one, is a position worthy of an enemy to tithes. Tithes, Sir, are as much the property of the clergyman as the soil is of the landlord. If the latter were as moderate as the former, and took only one-tenth of the fruits of the earth for rent, let me tell you, that "the lantern-jaws" of the farmer would soon be lighted up as they were wont to be, four years ago, when wheat was a guinea a bushel, so that you might see them at a distance, in a long lane, on a market night, gleaming like *Will-with-a-whisp.*

J. You are right, Sir, about tithes, but wrong about rents. Rents and tithes are like church and state, man and wife, hand and glove, bread and cheese, this and that, and fifty things beside. Let tithes stand, say I,—they are the Gothic pillars of the cathedral; let rents rise, they cannot be too high,—they are the Corinthian capitals of the palace.

K. O for a Sampson among the pillars, and a Cromwell at the capitals! No royalty and hierarchy united for me. England, Scotland and Ireland will never be great and

glorious, and happy, till they become republics, one and indivisible. Liberty and equality for ever! I would have every inch of ground in the two islands measured off, and allotted to the breadth of a barley-corn among all the citizens.

L. Then you would make a new division every time a child was born, or an old woman died; and pray how much time would there be left to do any thing besides with the land? Trigonometry might flourish; you would cultivate that in the fields, but you could cultivate nothing else there. Corn, grass, timber, turnips, potatoes, cattle, sheep, and game, would as soon grow and breed on the house-tops, as under the feet and in the eye of a surveyor. No, no; the soil is equitably enough apportioned; I myself have ten thousand acres; — the landed interest, the landed interest is the strength and the wealth of the nation.

M. Against the "strength" of the landed interest it would be in vain for me to contend, since it is great enough to domineer over

every other; but I presume the monied interest must be the "wealth" of the nation, and it is the defalcation of this that makes us so miserably poor at present. Three *per cents.* at sixty-two and a fraction, guineas at twenty-one shillings a piece, and dollars at no price, — these are the ills of the country. We are "on the verge, nay, in the gulf of bankruptcy."

N. So said Mr. Pitt concerning France, eighteen years ago; and yet France, lightened of her obligations by paying a *sous* in the *Louis*, (the full value of any thing of that name,) like other bankrupts, has begun the world again, and already struts and crows in the face of John Bull, who, like an honest trader, scorns to cheat his creditors, or even to compound with them: — though, I tremble while I say it, unless he does compound, and that soon, both he and they must go down together into a bottomless abyss.

O. Hold there; the sinking fund will prevent that. We should be rolling in riches if it were not for the parsimonious issues of

paper from the Bank of England. Till the directors are more accommodating in their discounts, how is it possible that either commerce or agriculture can be carried on with a circulating medium utterly disproportioned to their exigencies? I wonder what can be the meaning of the scarcity of bank notes; I am sure there is no scarcity of the raw material.

P. No, truly; rags are plentiful enough: though folks are forced to wear them so thin now, that they can scarcely be stiffened to hold together in the shape of paper, — especially country bank paper, for that which is town-made (from its connection with government, I suppose,) keeps its place like the king's ministers, with marvellous pertinacity. We should all be set at liberty, if the restriction upon cash-payments were taken off, and the directors were *permitted* to exchange their notes for gold.

Q. Pish! that is all a golden dream. It is high time for the nation to be awakened from it. All the gold in the kingdom, col-

lected and poured into the treasury, would hardly pay half a year's taxes. For a quarter of a century past we have had a government of lawyers: how could we expect any thing but grievances, quarrels, heart burnings and beggary in the issue from such a tribe? Look at the statute book, and you would think they had nothing to do, — or rather that they had done nothing else, — but to multiply acts of parliament for the emolument of their own fraternity.

R. It is better to have a government of lawyers than be brought under a military despotism, of which we were in no small danger, let me tell you, from the infatuated attachment in a certain quarter to cocked hats and Hessian boots, laced button-holes, feathers, gorgets, horse-tails, and trumpery of every kind, colour, and fashion, to disguise and degrade human nature. A standing army in time of peace is a standing curse. I would rather see my country rushing with naked breast on the bayonets of her enemies, than stabbed in her sleep by the guards at her

chamber-door. Disband the army, restore the navy; the wooden walls of old England are rotting round her coasts, while barracks are darkening all the region with their shadows.

S. For my part I wish the wooden walls of old England were metamorphosed into merchants' ships, and the barracks demolished and built up into cottages; I would have no soldiers in the country but Chelsea, and no sailors but Greenwich pensioners.

T. Neither army nor navy would hurt us in peace, and they are our right hand and our left in war, — if encouragement was given to the ingenuity of our mechanics, and the enterprize of our merchants. When we had the power both of the sword and the balance in our hands, at the congress of Vienna, and afterwards at Paris, we should not have been content to give away all the gains of the war to our enemies as well as our allies, and reserve nothing to ourselves but the glory of our arms, which even our plenipotentiaries could not negotiate away; — we ought to

have stipulated with every nation for free access to all its provinces with all our commodities. Had we but a clear ground and fair play on the Continent, notwithstanding the enormous pressure of taxation, our improvements in machinery for the abridgement of labour would enable us to meet, if not to undersell, the foreign manufacturer in his own market. Without commerce during the late war, our fleets and armies would have been as motionless and impotent as stuffed scarecrows in a corn-field, on which the birds themselves perch to pick the grain out of the husks which they have stolen. It was neither infantry, cavalry, marines, sailors, militia, nor even volunteers, that saved the country and delivered Europe; it was spinners and weavers, cutlers and frame-workers, colliers and ironfounders. The weapons, too, with which the conquest was achieved were neither cannons nor muskets, bayonets nor swords, but steam-engines, cotton-mills, anvils, and stocking-looms. These implements in their hands were invincible in war, and in

peace they would have been not less victorious against all competition.

U. Yet the very men that wielded these wonderful arms so triumphantly, are now breaking them to pieces in despair, as instruments of mischief to themselves, in making work, which is too scarce without them, scarcer still. The misrepresentation of the people in parliament is the cause of all our sufferings, and till we have a radical reform in the house of commons, times will never mend with us.

V. The people are as well represented as they deserve to be in parliament. They themselves are the most diversified race of animals in the world, and the House of Commons is the most motley assembly of beings that ever met in the character of legislators. Is there a man in the three kingdoms, beneath the peerage itself, who could not find his counterpart there, and consequently his representative? We want economy, and we want nothing else, to redeem us from all our difficulties; and economy

the present ministers are determined to exercise.

W. Penny-wise and pound-foolish in truth they are. Let them sacrifice some of their own emoluments, and then they may claim some credit for a disposition to spare the people's pockets.

X. The labourer is worthy of his hire: if the ministers are honest men, they will earn their salaries by their services; and I would not ask them to give up a farthing beyond their quota, with his Majesty's other lieges; but they ought to abolish all sinecure places and pensions.

Y. Sinecure places and pensions are the just rewards of honourable deeds; without them you would neither have statesmen, warriors, patriots, loyalists, politicians, nor even poets. There is a fund which might be very well expended in aid of our distressed fellow-subjects; the droits of admiralty would be much better distributed among paupers than princes.

Z. The droits of admiralty are the property of the sovereign, to dispose of as he pleases. If money must be wasted on the poor, let it be their own money; let them subscribe for themselves the weekly pennies which they squander in Bibles and Testaments, or send away beyond seas on missionary schemes.

There was something so grotesque and yet so shrewd in this recommendation, and the tone in which it was delivered, that the five-and-twenty brethren of this youngest and most perverse letter in the alphabet stood confounded, not knowing whether it had been seriously advanced, or sarcastically thrown out, as the climax of their own absurd and extravagant reveries. One and all, however, they protested against it. Z opened the door to slink away, when in came a little crooked thing, shaped like a crab, and like a crab walking side-ways, which always puts an end to alphabetical controversies, and without saying a syllable itself, implies all that has *not* been said by others, — consequently the best

arguments in most cases. At the sight of this nondescript, which is neither word, letter, nor numeral, (followed by its usual adjunct, little *c*,) all the disputants fled, leaving the field to &c.

A SCENE,

NOT TO BE FOUND IN ANY PLAY.

How much the country was benefited by the deliberations of the Alphabet in 1816, recorded in the foregoing pages, will appear by the following scene, not indeed to be found in any play, but which had a run of unparalleled popularity, having been acted daily by "His Majesty's Servants," in every part of his English dominions, during the whole year of 1821, and, with a few various readings, being still a stock piece.

SCENE. *A market-place in a little town. While the shopkeepers' apprentices are taking down the window-shutters, and sweeping the doors, their masters and other inhabitants assemble round the cross. The Grocer and the Draper meet first: the others gradually join the party as their names occur in the dialogue.*

Grocer. Good morrow, neighbour.

Draper. Good morrow, Sir; how are ye?

Grocer. Bravely, thank ye; — it's a fine morning.

Draper. Yes, Sir, yes; but it rained last night, Sir.

Grocer. So it did I believe; was there ever such weather in the world?

Draper. Were there ever such times, Sir? No wonder, Sir, the weather should go wrong when every thing else does.

Grocer. What! are *you* grumbling about hard fare?

Draper. It would be strange if I had not neighbour's fare, Sir; and that's hard enough, Sir.

Grocer. Aye, and I know it; why the very last thing last night, — I could scarcely sleep for dreaming of it. I sold a pound of farthing candles for seven-pence halfpenny, which would have fetched thirteen-pence a few years ago.

Draper. If they were still sold for thirteen-pence, Sir, pray would you put the difference in your pocket, Sir?

Grocer. No, to be sure; but it would have been in some-body's pocket.

Draper. Not in the pockets where it ought to be, and where it *is*, Sir.

Grocer. Which be they?

Draper. The pockets of those that burn farthing-candles, Sir, if they have any pockets left, after the stripping and rag-making of the war; — but only think, Sir, how we drapers are suffering; a yard of muslin for six-pence, and handkerchiefs for two-pence a piece, — positively two-pence a piece, Sir. — I should like to sell you three hundred dozen at the price.

Grocer. I am much obliged to you; half the quantity would wear out my nose, if it were to last forty years yet. But surely you don't lose by your great bargains; you buy as cheap as you sell?

Draper. Yes, Sir, yes; and a little cheaper too, or how could I make a living?

Baker. Living, gentlemen, living! Can you *live* and grumble?

Grocer. Aye, sure; what does an Englishman live for beside?

Baker. Why there's something in that; bakers can grumble too, but how they are to live would puzzle the pope. The quartern loaf that used to be eighteen-pence is barely sixpence now; and can any man alive get bread at such a starvation price?

Draper. Millions, Sir, millions, who could get it at no other; so scarce is money now-a-days.

Baker. You're merry, Mr. Gingham; but it's no laughing matter for us, who make bread for every body but ourselves, as markets go; and yet it's all along of the farmers who *will* sell their corn so cheap.

Farmer. Indeed, Master Crusty, farmers *will* because they *must*; and can you find a better reason? When one can get no more than a guinea a load for wheat which once fetched three times as much, what's a body to do, think ye?

Grocer. Take it, and be thankful too, you

unmerciful fellow; poor folks can't give you war-prices when peace has ruined them all.

Farmer. Ruined, quotha! Why peace has been the making of half of them; did you ever see so many beggars' brats running about the lanes and hedges? And then hasn't it hindered war from being the death of another half of the vagabonds, that for want of being killed off as they used to be, like brave fellows, are forced to kill themselves, in a low way, by drunkenness and all sorts of knavery, that don't do the work half so fast as powder and shot would. But farmers, indeed, farmers are always to be blamed, whether bread's dear or cheap. Our trade's like nobody else's: when there are most mouths and most call, d'ye see, for eatables, there ought to be the best price, in common sense; and yet I known't how it is, the more demand there is for corn, the more a drug it is. And then it's so provoking, there's all the bad weather this last harvest; I don't see that it has done a bit of good: neither smut nor sprout will mend the crop to us.

Draper. You chop logic like straw, Sir; and winnow your arguments like chaff, which indeed they are, Sir, begging your pardon; — the price of grain depends not upon mouths but means.

Baker. True; and yet because a man has a mouth, am I bound to find bread for it, though I am a baker? (*Aside.* I do by the bye.) There's most demand for your articles and mine, Master Clod-pole, when there's least money in the country, so that neither of us are any better for the wants and scants of our neighbours.

Banker's Clerk. Money! — there is little enough of that, though there is nothing in the world so easy to make.

Grocer. I wish you would teach me the secret.

Draper. And me, Sir; me.

Baker. Me too, if you please.

Farmer. I'd thank ye for a hint in the same way, if you have one to spare, when you have served these gentry.

Banker's Clerk. *Verbum sat.* as I was

taught at the free grammar school. A word to the wise will make you all so in this case. — The country has been brought to poverty, — aye to bankruptcy, by a return to cash-payments. Paper currency is the only natural circulating medium, — it is the life-blood of a wealthy nation; gold stagnates in its veins; and John Bull will never go well on his two legs — agriculture and commerce — till sovereigns are sent abroad to subsidize the Holy Alliance, and bank-notes, especially provincial ones, become as plentiful as they were in 1812.

Draper. Bank notes would set many people on their legs again as well as John Bull, if they were to be had at all at the present rate, when they will buy twice as much of any thing (except taxes and poor rates, which nothing can reduce) as they would when they were so dirt-cheap that an acre of land could hardly be had for an acre of paper.

Builder. T'other scale's uppermost now; and house and land are in the dirt. If I

had an handful of *Abraham Newlands*, as they were when I got them by thousands,— *Henry Hases* they are now, I believe, but I have had so little acquaintance lately with this last gentleman, that I scarcely know his mark;— but if I had a handful of such Bank notes, as were mere brick and mortar, lath and plaster, in my best days, I could buy a borough town, corporation and all, with what would hardly have built a loan contractor's dog-kennel ten years ago.

Tinker. Where's the good of Bank notes? say I.— Bank notes have cost hundreds of honest folks their lives, by tempting them to commit forgery, and be hanged to them. Give me guineas again:—I hate sovereigns — and radical reform; — don't mistake me; I mean, give me radical reform as well as guineas, not that I hate it as I do sovereigns, though Master Schoolmaster there is chuckling at my parts of speech, as if they weren't as good as his bad grammar. — Yet I shall as soon expect to see the time when there's an end of corruption, as when guineas shall be plenty in every body's pocket. Till then,

however, take my word for it, — and, till there's not a parliament-man to be bought or sold in the three kingdoms, — nothing else can be bought or sold at a fair price.

Schoolmaster. Well, you have opened your budget to some tune, Master Tinker; and to do you justice, the contents of it deserve a place in the Minister's green bag, with state apartments for yourself, next door to the lions and tigers in the Tower. For my part, I am a loyal man; so away with radical reform: give me the British Constitution, and the roast-beef of Old England for ever!

Grazier. Beef, marry! why you have it sixpence a pound lower than the oxen can afford to lay it on their bones; of one thing I'm sure, if the bullocks grow fat at the present Smithfield prices, their breeders don't, and if we take to drinking to drown care, ale's so dear that the pocket's empty before the noddle's full.

Landlord of the Brown Bear. Ale dear, Master Suet? — Take off the Excise, the malt and hop tax, and there will remain just

so much of the price as you may put in your eye and see no worse when you are as blind drunk, or as dead drunk, as your heart could wish. A publican can't afford to brew honest beer, and yet he dare brew no other, the penalties are so heavy, and the competition is so great; — we must make it good to sell it at all, which we do —

Draper. For nothing, hey, Sir?

Landlord. No, Sir; for worse than nothing — for *strap:* I'd as lief lose the reckoning at once as chalk it on the door, to remind me a hundred times a day that I *have* lost it.

Carrier. All your complaints are comforts compared to mine. Look at my establishment, — coaches, waggons, fly-boats, all blown up by steam! Some few may thrive on this vapour, but it will be death to the industrious classes, for steam will soon do all their labour, while they look on and starve. I am for people working with their hands in the old-fashioned way; were every body to do so, there would be constant employment and unfailing markets for our wares.

Cutler. That I deny. In my country we

have nothing but hands to work with, and yet to tell you the truth, the town is come to the parish, because it has so many hands. Steam-engines, indeed, are employed, and they work like horses, but it is only to do the work of horses. As for us poor forgers, and strikers, and setters and grinders, we make more goods than we sell, though we sell them for less than we can make them;—so at least they tell me, and as I have no head for figures, I must believe it; yet I cannot for the life of me comprehend what we live on, according to this reckoning. There is another thing that confounds me no less:—Gentlemen, I am a stranger to you, but you will pardon me for interrupting your discourse;—amidst all the distress of the farmers, and the outcries of tradesmen, I never observed the country in appearance so flourishing, nor the large towns so rapidly increasing, as during my late journey, on which I have been travelling many a week, and many a hundred miles, hawking a few knives, scissors, and razors, of which I shall

be glad to sell the remainder to you, Gentlemen, — under prime cost of course, that I may go home again, and see whether our poor district of Hallamshire is sharing the good fortune of the rest of the kingdom. At any rate, I shall have brave news to carry back to our broken down cutlers, — that if we can only earn half the wages we were wont, we may still buy as much of any thing good, — always excepting the taxes, which are bad enough in all conscience, — as we could with double the money in the most glorious years of the war; so fair fall peace with all its evils! For my part, I am determined to bear them a little longer, since, — while candles are seven-pence half-penny a pound, I need not want light; while muslin is sixpence a yard, my wife need not want finery; while corn is a guinea a load, my children need not want bread; while land and houses are fallen from paper-prices to the golden mean, my family need not want house or home; but, above all, while roast beef may be had cheaper than the cattle

themselves can afford to grow it in the best pastures of Lincolnshire, — no wonder that they lose their lives so soon in the trade; — and while "honest ale" may be got on trust, — these must be good times for those that *buy*, whatever they may be for those that *sell!*

MUTABILITY.

" I made a posy, while the day ran by ;
' Here will I smell my remnant out, and tie
My life within this band :'
But Time did beckon to the flowers, and they
By noon most cunningly did steal away,
And wither'd in my hand." HERBERT.

MUTABILITY is the everlasting theme of lamentation with poets, historians, orators and moralists, and yet, say what they will against it, they could do very little without it. The world, through all its forms, might as well be a block of cast iron, whose blackness, sameness, and rigidity, would be happily exchanged for the picturesque colouring, and curious excavations of rust itself, were it not for that incessantly operating principle of

vicissitude through external things, which is rather discovered in its effects than remarked in its progress, and which in fact is the principle of self-renovation in nature, though mysteriously disguised under perpetual self-destruction. Of Rome itself, "the eternal city," as it is proudly denominated even by its present ephemeral tenants, it has been fancifully, yet truly said, that "nothing is permanent there, but that which is always passing away;" the *river* remains, though the seven hills on which the metropolis of the world was built have been lost for ages under the ruins of palaces and temples, of which they were once the lofty and immovable foundations: so that, as one of its poets hath sung,

——— "in vano
"Roma in Roma ricerco." FILICAJA.

In vain I seek for Rome in Rome.

Were we to select some mountain in the midst of a tropic wilderness, where the foot

of man hath never trod, nor his hand for one moment interrupted the course of nature from the hour when the waters of the deluge left the solitary elevation bare to the influences of the heavens; the action of sunshine, rain, and storms, through four thousand years unremittingly modifying its surface; — and could we be presented with accurate pictures of its respective appearances from century to century, there cannot be a doubt that each would be so dissimilar from all the rest as to be perfectly distinguishable. The bulk, the face, the produce, and many other features of a huge heap of earth, with a crest of rocks upon its brow, thus left to itself and the elements, would probably exhibit such alternate progress, both of decay and renewal, that even the History of a Hill might be rendered an interesting work.

For example: — we should read how the ragged and angular crags on its peak were insensibly worn down by the tread of Time, till they became comparatively smooth pro-

minences, richly tinted with lichens and mosses; — how its naked sides were from season to season clothed with grass, and flowers, and plants of increasing variety, as fresh seeds were wafted by winds, or scattered by birds upon its soil; — how a forest at length overshadowed it, which for hundreds of years was the haunt of wild beasts, and deadly serpents, till the lightning of heaven, striking suddenly in the midst, fired a dead trunk, from which the tempest drove the flames among the multitude of living trees, and consumed the whole to ashes; — how in a few years a luxuriant jungle of underwood covered this desolation, and gave food as well as shelter to the weaker animals, when they fled from the lion and the leopard in the chace; — how again all this beauty was laid waste by a volcanic eruption, that converted the mountain into a furnace, which, however, in the lapse of ten generations of the race of man, burned itself out, and left a hideous mass of crude cinders, for the invisible hand of Providence, ever secretly work-

ing good out of evil, again to mould into symmetry, and replenish with new bounties for new almoners among brute creatures. Thus, to say nothing of the marvellous events in the lives of worms under its turf, or the revolutions of empires in ant-hills on its surface, the very changes of aspect which a mountain assumes in the course of an existence coeval with the sun and moon, though so slow as to be perceptible only by comparisons made at intervals of ages, prove that mutability furnishes inexhaustible materials for instruction and entertainment, in the stories which she tells, and the morals which she teaches, to those who can understand the language wherein she speaks to man,—himself the most fickle of beings under her dominion.

And yet, amidst continual change, we feel always at rest; nor, till we reflect on what is already past, do we discover that the present, too, is passing away. Every moment ends one year and begins another; the earth in its perennial revolutions is unceasingly touch-

ing those points in its orbit which it touched twelve months before, and antecedently up to the creation, with comparatively slight, though progressively regular deviation. As the sun and stars seem to stand still in the firmament, while their advance can only be ascertained by their *having* visibly removed from one station to another; and as the increase or failure of light in the course of the day is utterly indistinguishable from instant to instant, though readily traced from hour to hour, — so, to perceive the lapse of time, we must take our stand in the midst of perpetual motion, and from fixed periods, marked by conventional signs, measure in thought the intervals that divide them. Thus days, and weeks, and months, and years, are computed, and we have perfectly definite notions of these; while a moment, in its origin, duration, and issue, as a link of an indissoluble chain, connected with all that ever was, or will be, in this universe, — a moment is as incomprehensible as an eternity.

Every instant not only ends a year, and

begins one, but on an average gives birth to one being of our species, and carries another to the grave; life and death, thus playing into each other's hands, keep *man* always alive upon the earth, while *men* are incessantly dying. Nor is subtle, insensible, everlasting change confined to the idea of time; it is an innate quality of all the organized forms of nature, (and probably of all its brute matter,) which spring up, flourish, and decay by a process so exquisite, that Omniscience alone can understand what Omnipotence alone could produce. Were we to fix our eye upon a plant from the first green speck of its appearance above ground, — were we to mark it with unsleeping and intense curiosity till it blossomed, and seeded, and withered, — in all that space we should never be able to see it grow at all, though that it *had* grown might be apparent, in the first stages, between every sunrise and sunset, and its ripening and decline afterwards would be not less palpably, though more slowly developed.

If we duly consider ourselves, we shall *feel* as well as acknowledge, that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made." Our bodies are subjects of transmutations equally imperceptible and unremitting with those which take place throughout inanimate nature! the whole economy of existence, — growth, nourishment, sleep, complexion, feature, health, strength, &c. — is altogether independent of our choice; "we live, and move, and have our being," as involuntarily as we were born, and as we shall die; nor is there any thing in the world of spirits more hidden from human scrutiny than that most obvious fact and greatest secret of life, — our life itself. We know that we live, but we know nothing more; — whence? how? why? what? and twenty other monosyllables would puzzle all the schools to answer, and keep them puzzled to the end of days, without even approaching to a satisfactory solution. Were an infant to be watched from its first hour through childhood, youth, maturity, old age, as uninterruptedly as we have presumed a plant to

be watched through its season, — the growth of that breathing form would be utterly invisible to the eye fixed for ever upon it, though the gaze were as keen as the fascination of a serpent; yet while the object, from moment to moment, seemed as unchangeable as the blue sky, the truth might be evident, in each of its stages, from one brief date to another, that it had been all the while as variable as the clouds, which are never for two seconds the same in colour, shape, and size.

This may be deemed a very absurd and impossible case, and literally it is so; but has not each of us, from the cradle to the grave, such a witness at our side of all we are, or have, or seek, or do, — a witness to all our thoughts, and words, and feelings? Not that by this mysterious personage is meant either a good or an evil spirit; no, nor even the great God himself; but a real being of our own species, one of like passions with ourselves, under whose eye, in whose mind, and before whose presence, it may be said,

we are continually, whether sleeping or waking, alone or in company, however engaged, and wherever we be. Parents, kindred, friends, acquaintance, strangers, all whom we know or encounter, in our journey through time, are fellow-travellers with us only for a few stages, or a few steps; — the secret and swift witness here alluded to goes with us all the way.

A brute lives only in the present; and whatever portion of memory, or mode of thought, it may be contended that mere animals have, there is no evidence that they ever spontaneously exercise either, or possess the faculty of self-reflection in any degree. They look downward and onward, but never behind, or above, or within. Man as a spirit is perfectly distinct from man as an animal; so that, having a double part to beat through life, — to *act* and to *reflect* on his actions, — in the latter character he becomes as genuine a spectator of himself, as any by-stander would be who overlooked him day and night, and saw into the recesses of his soul. It is

true that this perpetual witness of our thoughts and their issues is frequently deceived, but it is because he delights to deceive himself, since it is no more necessary for him to see any thing that comes under his sole inspection in a false light, than it is for one neighbour to see another with two noses on his face, or two faces to his head; but if a man will squint when he looks at his fellow-creatures he may; then of course they will appear to him as ludicrously distorted as he makes them; and if a man will squint, with a very contrary effect, when he looks at himself with the introverted eye of the mind, he may please his foolish imagination by appearing as wise, as good, and as great as—he is *not*.

But the intellectual man, by the power of self-scrutiny, is not only as insulated a spectator through life of his own purposes and deeds, as either a recording or an accusing angel could be; but when he chooses to be honest, he is as truly disinterested and impartial an evidence as Justice herself could

require, in testifying concerning them at the bar of conscience. On the return of every birth-day anniversary, if at no other time, an assize ought to be held by each of us in that inexorable court, from the decisions of which, severe as they are, it is well for us that there lies an appeal before the higher tribunal of heaven. It behoves us then, individually, to summon that witness to a closet examination in our own hearts, touching the occurrences of the year that is past, so far as we have been actors or sufferers in them; and though while he has been present with us, feeling every pulse, and marking every breath, it may not have appeared to him, from one throb or aspiration to another, that any change was taking place, yet on the comparative retrospect of twelve months he can assuredly convince us, that if, like the earth, we have seemed to be at rest, like the earth also we have been carried forward in our course by a motion too rapid to be felt; while, *not* like her in an orbit revolving into itself, but in a line as level as the sunbeam, and dart-

ing as directly to its termination, we have been passing through unresisting space into unknown eternity. Here, then, let each take his stand, and think for himself,—for himself alone,—since no other man can do it for him, or do him any good with thinking, what he has been, what he is, and what he will be for ever, remembering that the first cannot be altered, the second is changing every instant, and the third depends on the issue of both.

A lady had written on a card, and placed, in her garden-house, on the top of an hour-glass, a beautifully simple stanza from one of the fugitive pieces of the Northamptonshire bard, John Clare: it was at that season of the year when the flowers were in their highest glory.

" To think of Summers yet to come
That I am not to see!
To think a weed is yet to bloom
From dust that I shall be!"

The next morning she found the following lines pencilled on the back of the same card:

" To think, when heaven and earth are fled,
And times and seasons o'er;
When all that *can* die shall be dead,
That I must die no more!
Ah! *where* will then my portion be?
How shall I spend eternity?"

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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